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THE PEOPLE OF GOD

AN INQUIRY INTO CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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PREFACE

THE first of these two volumes deals with the authority of the Old Testament and its religion ; the second with the origin of the Church and the ministry. It may, perhaps, be asked why two subjects so distinct from each other are not treated in two separate books. The answer is, because both are included in an account of Christian origins as organic parts of a single whole.

This will be most readily seen if I state here the central position which links the two extremes together. Jesus, it is agreed by all, freed men from the burden of the Jewish Law. But how, and in what sense ? If He freed any one, He freed the Jews of His own day. And they believed they were bound to the Law as to an ordinance supernaturally given by God Himself. Jesus, then, could have freed them only in one or other of two ways. Either, He taught them that the Law had never been supernaturally revealed, and that therefore they need no longer consider themselves to be under any obligation towards it ; or else, He shared their belief in the supernatural authority of the Law and delivered men from it by claiming to be endowed by God with a similar supernatural authority to annul the Old and inaugurate a New Covenant. It will be seen in Chapter VIII of this volume that the latter alternative alone is in accordance with the facts of history.

Perhaps the strongest objection to ascribing to Jesus a belief in the Law as a supernatural revelation lies in the fact that, at first sight, it seems impossible to harmonize such a belief with the result of modern scientific criticism of the Old Testament. Hence the position taken in Chapter VIII is preceded by a discussion of the development

of the Jewish religion and its value as compared with other religions. An outline of this argument will be found in the Introduction, pp. xxvii-xxxiii.

According to the view advanced here, Christianity is simply the religion of the Jews reorganized by Jesus the Messiah. It is essentially the same religion as the Jewish, because its worship is directed towards one and the same divine Person, the Almighty and All-holy national God of Israel ; for both Jew and Christian claimed to worship this God, and both denied that He was served by any other people. The truth of this statement is not affected by the differences in doctrinal teaching between Christianity and Judaism ; for the Creeds are but logical deductions from the records of a revelation which was, as a matter of historical fact, given to the Jews—both the Old Testament revelation through the prophets, and the New Testament revelation through Jesus the Messiah and His Holy Spirit.

What I mean by ‘ the religion of the Jews reorganized ’ is, as will be seen below, this. The basis of salvation was shifted, if such an expression is permissible, from the Law to the Death of the Messiah. From this it follows that the Law is bound to fall into insignificance ; and with the Law goes circumcision and all that is distinctive of Jewish extraction and nationality. Since salvation now depends on faith in Jesus as Messiah and on His Death on the Cross, it follows that the highest privileges of the Jewish religion are thrown open to the Gentiles upon precisely the same terms as to the Jews ; it is no longer important to be circumcised, or to observe the Law, or to be a Jew. Hence the freedom wherewith Jesus made us free. Thus, it will be observed, the old Jewish exclusiveness was broken down, not between the Jewish and other religions, but between Jew and Gentile in respect of the opportunity of enjoying the privileges of the national religion of the Jews. And it was just this fact which caused that national religion to cease to be national and to become universal.

This position is reinforced by the first chapter of Volume II, which endeavours to show that Christianity came into existence for no other reason than because certain devout Jews became convinced that this Jesus of Nazareth had divine authority to thus reorganize the national religion. Moreover, for every one who believes that Jesus had this authority from God, it follows that those who put their trust in Jesus constitute the true Israelites, the new, the Messianic Israel, who have been obedient to God and to his Messiah ; other Jews who have disobeyed God have thereby cut themselves off from the inheritance of their fathers. Hence the believers in Jesus are the true People of God, the possessors of all the privileges—and more than these—which had once belonged to Israel after the flesh. In the course of time, they became known as ‘ the Church ’ and as ‘ Christians ’ (cf. vol. ii, chap. ii).

Thus, I attempt to sketch an account of Christian origins which appears to form a consistent whole and which must stand or fall as a whole. The chapters on the ministry are not so vitally united to the rest ; but, since the idea of the Church is scarcely complete without a reference to the ministry, they are included in the same work. Moreover, the view taken of the origin of the ministry is influenced in several particulars by the discussion which precedes it.

All Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Version ; but the word ‘ Yahweh ’ has been substituted for LORD or GOD wherever those terms stand for the personal name of the national God of Israel—a name so often mispronounced ‘ Jehovah ’. Wherever a variation from the Revised Version has been adopted, the reasons for doing so are given.

Acknowledgement is due to those who have kindly permitted me to reproduce translations and extracts ; to the Delegates of the Oxford University Press for the translation of the inscription on the Moabite Stone from Dr. Driver’s *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of*

Samuel, and for passages from Jowett's translation of Plato's *Laws* and Ross's translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; to Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for the use of Lightfoot's translation of *St. Clement of Rome* in *The Apostolic Fathers*, and for an extract from Mr. Edghill's *Evidential Value of Prophecy*; to Messrs. A. and C. Black for quotations from Dr. Charles's translations in *The Book of Jubilees*, *The Assumption of Moses*, and *The Apocalypse of Baruch*; to the Chicago University Press for Harper's translation of a Babylonian Penitential Psalm in *Literature of Babylonia and Assyria*; to Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons for the reproduction of a hymn to Amon Rē, from Steindorff's *Religion of Ancient Egypt*; to Messrs. Williams and Norgate for passages from Dr. Harnack's *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, and Kittel's *History of the Hebrews*; and to Mr. T. Fisher Unwin for a quotation from Professor Bousset's *What is Religion?* These and other obligations, so far as I am aware of them, I have acknowledged in the footnotes.

There remains only the welcome duty of expressing my gratitude to those who have so kindly assisted me in reading the proofs. Canon Ottley, of Christ Church, read the proofs of the first volume, and the Rev. A. E. J. Rawlinson, M.A., Tutor of Keble College, Oxford, read those of the second. I am indebted to both for many valuable suggestions. To the Rev. C. W. Mitchell, M.A., Hebrew master of Merchant Taylors' School, I owe a special debt for a painstaking revision of the proofs of the whole work.

HAROLD HAMILTON.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a trite saying that our conception of the inspiration of the Bible has undergone a profound change. The old theory of verbal inspiration has passed away and is not likely to return. We are now wont to say that inspiration is not the dictation of books, but the inbreathing of God's Holy Spirit into the hearts and consciences of men. 'It has always been the Divine method to select certain men, to enter into peculiar intimacy with them, to reach their spirits by the direct operation of the Divine Spirit, to purify their hearts, to quicken their perceptive faculties, and to entrust them with a special knowledge of the Divine will and purpose in order that they may be the teachers of their fellow men. This is the primary meaning of inspiration; men are inspired by the contact of the Divine Spirit with their spirits, not for their own sakes merely, or even chiefly, but that they may interpret the will of God to the men of their time'.¹ According to this view, the hearts of the writers were purified and their perceptive faculties were quickened, but their consciousness and will-power were not suppressed entirely and replaced by something which was not human but divine. Hence there is a human element as well as a divine in the composition of the Bible; and the divine is not greater than that which the human, at each advancing stage of the process, could receive and express.

This latter conception of inspiration has brought with it many obvious advantages. It enables us to hold to the inspiration of the Bible without regarding the God-given light of modern scientific inquiry as darkness and confusion. The science and historical accuracy of the Books belong to the age in which they were written; they are part of the human element; the Bible was not written to teach us scientific knowledge, nor to recount to us the exact historical minutiae of a remote age. Again, we are relieved

¹ Armitage Robinson, *Some Thoughts on Inspiration*, p. 12 f.

of the difficulty involved in the moral imperfections of the Old Testament ; those imperfections are 'economic' ; the standard of each book, however imperfect from a Christian standpoint, represents the best which the men of that day could understand and appreciate. Finally, while the theory of verbal inspiration is an assumption vouched for only by tradition, the modern view is based on an inductive argument and has an answer to give to those who would probe its foundations.

But in spite of these advantages, the modern view has one great disadvantage which more than outweighs all that is to be said in its favour. The Bible is the storehouse of Christian theology and morals, the treasury of the Christian preacher. It is in connexion with the preacher's work that the loss is felt most severely. Let us endeavour first to see what the Bible was in the hands of the preacher in the days when verbal inspiration was the universal doctrine, and then to see what it is under the modern view. To those who accepted verbal inspiration, the Bible was the final court of appeal in all matters of religion and morals. Its words were infallible and could make an indefeasible claim upon men for belief and obedience. The only question which could be in dispute was—what does the Bible say and mean ? Once this was settled, the line of duty was clear. The preacher occupied a unique position of unparalleled authority. He went into the pulpit armed with this Book, which all his hearers acknowledged to have a right to determine what they should do and what they should believe. The business of the preacher was to expound this Book, to make clear what it really meant, to show the bearing of its words upon the lives of his hearers. His audience was keenly interested to hear him, not for his cleverness alone, nor for his personal efficiency as a speaker, nor for any private views of life which he might hold, but because he was the authorized exponent of a message dictated by God for man's guidance. The effect of his message depended not so much on his own personality and ability, as upon that Word of God from which he deduced all he had to say. The personality of the man was secondary to the Biblical text which he expounded.

The preacher's position was thus one of extraordinary power and authority. No one else in the community occupied a vantage-ground at all comparable to his. The press and the platform must rely on their sheer native ability and powers of persuasion ; for they had no divinely dictated message from which to draw their proof-texts. The pulpit alone possessed a Book every word of which was from the mouth of God, and which was therefore infallible and of final authority.

But according to the modern view, there is a human element in the Bible as well as a divine ; and the question at once arises, where does the human end and the divine begin ? Which is fallible and which is infallible ? And the door is opened to questionings which penetrate deeper than this. Is there any divine element in it at all ? On what grounds can we say that the Bible is a message from God to which deference is due ? Answers to these questions are advanced, but they are not such as place the Bible where it was before. They seem to lack just that which the old belief in verbal inspiration supplied so efficiently and so thoroughly. They do not show just how or why any words from the Bible have a right to claim obedience and faith from men. Accordingly, the Christian preacher's position is entirely altered ; his audience is no longer conscious that he possesses an infallible message from God ; indeed, the tendency is to feel that his message must be drawn from the depths of his own human experience and sympathy, and driven home by the force of his own persuasive eloquence. He may select from the Bible a verse or two to serve as a pithy summary of what he has to say, or a handle with which to introduce a discourse which has its own logical basis and argument quite independent of the Bible, and which would be as true and as cogent if it were prefaced by a passage from a moral philosopher or a religious poet. In other words, he addresses his appeal on even terms with the press and the platform. The man of great power will always draw a crowd, but the man of slender gifts has little but those slender gifts wherewith to impart the power of conviction to his words.

But let us see what are the chief arguments advanced to

support the idea that there is a divine element in the Bible. One line of thought frequently advanced runs as follows. It being granted that there is a God who is likely to give a revelation of Himself and His will to man, that revelation must be in the Bible if it is anywhere ; because, when we contrast the Bible with the sacred books of other religions, we find in it so much more of what is true, pure, and divine. There are a great many variations in the way in which this thought is put. Let us choose the words of Dr. Sanday.

‘ For the Hebrew it was reserved beyond all other peoples to teach the world what it knows of Religion. From that point of view which we have seemed justified in taking, we shall say that it was the instrument specially chosen of God for that purpose. We do not deny a Divine guiding in other races. Not wholly in the dark did men of other nationalities grope after an object of worship and of praise. But it is from the Hebrew stock that we have the Bible, and the Bible is by general consent the highest expression, the most perfect document of Religion.’¹ ‘ And perhaps our language would be most safely guarded if we were to say that when and in so far as we speak of the Bible as inspired in a sense in which we do not speak of other books as inspired, we mean precisely so much as is covered by that difference. It may be hard to sum up our definition in a single formula, but we mean it to include all those concrete points in which, as a matter of fact, the Bible does differ from and does excel all other Sacred Books.’²

Let us observe carefully what is involved in this argument. When the Bible is contrasted with other sacred books, it is found to exceed them in containing more of what is worthy to be called divine, more of what can be said to be ‘ Religion ’. It seems, then, that we have a standard of what is divine by reference to which we test the Bible. Clearly, then, the Bible is no longer the final court of appeal ; there is a standard behind it by means of which it is proved to be inspired. The logic of a situation often makes its influence felt long before it is expressly formulated in words. In some

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 126 f.

² Ibid. p. 128 ; cf. also Sanday, in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, i 578, 579, and Garvie, *Encyc. Brit.*, Ed. XI, xiv 647 f.

dim half-conscious way people are beginning to seek for that standard which lies behind the Bible. If the Bible as a whole is to be submitted to a test, so must individual passages and doctrines. That which cannot be supported by an appeal to the extra-Biblical standard has little chance of acceptance ; while that which runs counter to this popular common-sense theology, whether it be in the Bible or not, is still less likely to dominate thought and conduct. It is no longer sufficient to say, this is in the Bible, therefore it must be true. The preacher must appeal to the common sense of his hearers, to their general experience of life, and to their indefinite unformulated conception of what is true and divine. And sometimes his argument runs thus—this is a true and noble idea ; it is in the Bible ; see, then, how excellent the Bible is !

All this must be taken subject to one considerable reservation. Christianity is to very many people a coherent system of thought, and the outlines of that system are contained in the Bible ; accordingly, that which can be shown to be part of the Biblical system of Christianity is accepted without further appeal. But this reservation does not entirely do away with the truth of what has been said above ; for in these cases, the testimony of the Scripture is accepted, not simply because it is written in the Bible, but because it rounds off a logical position the essence of which has already been adopted. And of this more will be said below.

But it is also said that the supreme excellence of the work of the Biblical writers proves their inspiration ; for an unusual degree of excellence in any branch of human activity of a beneficent character must be due to the presence, in an unusual degree, of the Spirit of God, who is immanent in all things and in all men. When it is argued that this will prove the inspiration of Shakespeare as well, the answer will probably be that the Bible deals with a different and a higher subject-matter than Shakespeare ; the latter does not pretend to teach moral and religious truth, nor does he claim to speak in the name of God. No doubt the distinction is a true one, but it is questionable whether it entirely

disposes of the objection. If Shakespeare does not pretend to teach us theology or morals, it is clearly impossible to set up his works as a religious guide either by the side of, or as a substitute for, the Bible. But if we set the Bible up as a normative standard in religious matters simply on the ground of the superior excellence of its workmanship, must we not also claim that Shakespeare supplies us with an authoritative standard to which all dramas ought to conform? If an inspiration of this kind proves the Bible to be authoritative in its sphere, does not the same kind of inspiration prove Shakespeare to be authoritative in his sphere? Shakespeare is the best of his kind, and in view of this we may ascribe some sort of inspiration to him; but we cannot set him up as a standard of what ought to be. If, then, the Bible is merely the best of its kind, can we set it up as the final authority? Again, it is true that the Bible has been able to appeal to and evoke response from multitudes of the best minds of every class of society; so also has Shakespeare; but Shakespeare is not on that account set up as the final ideal of what ought to be in the drama; can we, then, on this ground, prove the authority of the Bible? These arguments do not take us all the way we would like to go. They do not replace the Bible in that position of unique authority which it occupied when men took it down to compare it with other sacred books.

But there is yet another line of thought, and one which is perhaps more commonly relied on. It is that which bases the whole Bible on the Personality of Jesus Christ. And here we seem to have our feet on solid ground. When worked out in full, this argument would run on the following lines. We begin with the Gospels, and without assuming any idea of inspiration, submit them to the same searching literary and historical criticism which is applied to other records of the past. The effects which followed from the life and work of Jesus are taken into consideration, and, as a result of it all, His Personality stands out unique in such wise that He can only be explained as the Son of God Incarnate in the Catholic sense. Now the Bible contains the record of that manifestation of God, of what preceded and of what followed

it. Hence it is unique and the source of authority for the Christian religion.¹

But when this line of argument has been stated and successfully maintained, one must not fail to recognize that it has limitations. The basis of authority is shifted from the Books to the Person of whom the Books speak. And so the door is opened for a discussion as to what this Person said and taught; as to what value He placed upon His own Personality; and as to whether the Apostolic writers have interpreted Him aright. We may feel that these questions can be answered successfully, but we can scarcely refuse to admit that they involve a long process of close inquiry and careful reasoning. And it is just this which makes the difference from the preacher's point of view. He may be quite clear in his own mind about that process of reasoning, but unless it is clear to his audience as well, the authority of the Bible, and of any particular doctrine or passage which he may draw from it, cannot be the same to them as it is to him. Again, it is not sufficient simply to say, this is in the Bible; it must be shown to be a necessary part of that system of which Christ is the centre. And that system is not at present quite easy for the average man to grasp and define. Accordingly the authority behind the preacher is, in the popular mind, elusive and indefinite. But perhaps time may be expected to remedy, or at least to mitigate, this difficulty.

And this is not all. As regards the Old Testament there is one serious defect in this line of thought which does not apply where the New Testament is concerned. The Bible as

¹ This argument was well put by Marcus Dods as follows: 'While we acknowledge that the same Spirit speaks to us through the words and writings and lives of all good men, why do we set Scripture apart from them all and assign to it a place of supremacy? We do so because these books which form our Bible are all in direct connexion with God's historical revelation which culminated in Christ. It is this alone which gives to the Bible its normative character and separates it from all other literature' (*The Bible; its Origin and Nature*, p. 23). 'The value of the Bible results from its connexion with Christ. He is the supreme ultimate revelation of God, and the Bible, being the amber in which He is preserved for man, is as inviolable and unique as He' (ib. p. 25).

a whole is based upon the Personality of Jesus. The New Testament receives its value because it is the record of His Life and contains the teaching of those who knew Him and received the outpouring of His Spirit. And the Old Testament is said to be inspired because it leads up to, and shows how the way was prepared for, the coming of Christ ; for this reason also it is said to be an essential part of the system which has Jesus for its centre and basis. The whole weight of the Old Testament, then, the burden of the proof of its inspiration and divine authority, is made to rest upon the Personality of Christ. His Personality is quite strong enough to bear it ; but plainly and undoubtedly, to put things in this way is to reverse the proper order. Jesus and His Apostles did not base the Old Testament on Him. Quite on the contrary, they believed that the Jewish Scriptures had an authority prior to His appearance, and by an appeal to them they sought to prove His divine mission. It was because He fulfilled the Old Testament that they believed Him to have been sent by God as Messiah ; and they went forth to preach, ' shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.' ¹ The Scriptures had an authority independent of His manifestation. They were the very Word of God which could not be broken. To the Apostles, the Scriptures proved the authority of Jesus ; there was no need to call in His authority to prove them. And to Jesus Himself also the Scriptures were of divine authority. The wiles of the Tempter are refused because they imply a violation of the will of God contained in the Old Testament. In them is found the way to eternal life. It is because of what is written in the Scriptures that He must suffer and die.²

If, then, we base the Old Testament upon the Personality of Jesus, we start with a 'reduced' Christianity at the outset. Have we not here the explanation of numerous failures to give an adequate account of Christian origins ? Can we hope to understand Him and His Apostles aright, when we differ so widely from them on the question of basic authority ? As has been seen, much stress is now being laid

¹ Acts xviii 28 ; cf. xvii 2, 11 ; iii 18, 24 ; Rom. i 1-3 ; 1 Cor. xv 3, 4, &c.

² See below, pp. 232-4.

upon the system of things of which the historic Personality of Jesus Christ is the centre. Can we ever be sure that we have grasped His system aright so long as we are unable to see in the Old Testament what He saw there, to take up towards it an attitude similar to His, to find in it that which is able to help us to prove His divine mission ? To say that the religion of Jesus has its roots in the Old Testament is true ; but it is only half the truth ; the religion of Jesus has its roots in a certain view of the Old Testament—that quite independently of Jesus and His words, there is contained in it an authoritative message concerning God's Being, Will, and purposes for man. We can base the Old Testament upon the Personality of Jesus ; but if we are content to rest here, we must abandon the hope of understanding His teaching and His religion aright.

II

Destructive criticism is a comparatively easy task ; to attempt a construction is one for which some indulgence must be craved. It may be well to begin here with a brief outline of the course of the argument to be followed below. The starting-point of the discussion is in the transition from polytheism to monotheism. At one time the belief in many gods held the minds of multitudes of civilized men in a hard relentless grasp. Escape from this darkness was effected at two different points, by two different races, quite independently of each other.

Chapter I is concerned with the rise of philosophical monotheism among the Greeks. It endeavours to lay bare the prejudices and tricks of thought which made polytheism such an ever present reality in the ancient civilizations, and to trace the process by which those prejudices were gradually broken down and replaced by the more enlightened belief of monotheism. The cause of this process is found to be a growing knowledge of nature and the birth of a new conception of causation—what we call ' natural ' causation. This idea of natural causes drove the old gods out of one corner of creation after another, till it finally banished them altogether by leaving no room for them anywhere ; they

ceased to have existence as cosmic powers. The Greeks found out that things happen by 'nature', not by the immediate intervention of so many different unseen beings. The universe, they saw, must be explained as a single whole, from a single source. Then came the great induction of one Supreme Being, the First Cause, the ground and source of all existence, the infinite Intelligence which has ordered things as they are. All the old gods, in a real sense, perished, and then a new God was discovered, a result due, not to any one religious system, but to philosophical inquiry.

Chapters II to V discuss the origin of the Hebrew monotheism, which is found to stand in the strangest contrast to the process outlined above. The monotheistic beliefs of the prophets are defined by comparing them, on the one hand, with the contemporary polytheism, and, on the other, with the speculative monotheism of Plato and Aristotle. Chapter II gives a brief outline of the development of the national religion of the Hebrews, and is written from the standpoint of a moderate criticism. It shows that, to all intents and purposes, the great mass of the nation were, up to the days of the exile, polytheists; for they believed their national God, Jehovah—or, to use the more correct pronunciation, 'Yahweh'—to be nothing more or less than a characteristic Semitic deity. Against this polytheistic background one must study the doctrine of the prophets. The point at issue between the prophets and the people is not whether there is one God only or more than one; that point is involved, but it is not uppermost in the minds of either side; the debate is not concerned with the meaning of existence or the ultimate nature of Reality, but with the limits of the power and the moral character of a certain divine Person whose existence both sides alike assume without question, and who is known to both by the name of Yahweh, the national God of the Hebrews. The prophetic belief ought to be called 'mono-Yahwism'—hybrid and ugly though the word is—rather than 'monotheism'. Both have in mind one and the same Person; the dispute concerns the powers and the character of that Person; to the average Hebrew, He is a characteristic Semitic deity; to the prophet,

He is Almighty, absolutely righteous, and besides Him there is none else. The problem of the Hebrew monotheism or mono-Yahwism, then, resolves itself into this: How did a handful of the Hebrews come to believe that their national God was the only God and righteous?

Chapter III begins by showing that the real nature of the problem is that which has been outlined above. It also asks whether the belief that Yahweh is the only God could have been the outcome of any process of inductive reasoning. Was it the same process which resulted in Greek monotheism? Was it due to the rise of a new conception of causation, to a truer knowledge of the natural world than was possessed by their polytheistic contemporaries? This must be answered in the negative. All those primitive ways of looking at things, and all those prejudices and assumptions regarding the nature of the universe and of existence, which made polytheism a living reality to their contemporaries, were accepted by the Hebrew monotheists without question. Causation was to them precisely what it was to the polytheists—the immediate intervention of a personal will. The main difference is that where the polytheists saw a multitude of conflicting wills at work behind phenomena, the prophets saw but one, the will of their national God intervening universally, ceaselessly, and immediately, to accomplish His holy moral purposes.

Was it, then, a reasoned argument based on the facts of history and the changing scenes of international politics? This also must be answered in the negative. The logic of history was set against the idea that the God of Israel had no equal; and of this the prophets themselves seem to have been conscious.

Chapter IV discusses the origin of the belief in the righteous character of Yahweh. The superior ethical teaching of the prophets does not consist in a truer knowledge of ethical principles; they accept the moral standard of their day as sufficient. They are not reformers of theoretical morals, but of practical morals; their peculiarity lies in the ground on which they urge men to live up to what they already know to be right. That ground is the moral character of Yahweh,

the God of Israel, who, they say, requires from His people Israel, as the first condition of His favour, a life of national righteousness. Here, again, the differentia of the prophets has no relation to philosophical principles, but to the character of a particular divine Person known to history as Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews. The average Israelite believed that His goodwill could be won by the same means as those which propitiated the gods of many another race. But the prophets maintained that His face would never be turned towards His people until they cleansed themselves from evil and learned to do well.

Was this belief the result of an induction? Since they did not perceive the organic unity of the universe, they could hardly have seen in it a power which on the whole makes for righteousness. Nor again was the logic of history entirely on their side. They seldom attempt to prove their point by an appeal to history.

Certain other possibilities also are discussed in these two chapters. The Hebrew ethical monotheism was not due to the natural genius of the Hebrew race. Against that theory there is sufficient evidence in Chapter II. Nor was it due to the idea that Yahweh could cast off Israel because He was united to them by a voluntary covenant rather than by an act of physical generation. None of the prophets maintained that Yahweh could not cast off the Hebrews; but, with one or two possible exceptions, they are quite sure that He never will do so; and that because they feel that, having once pledged Himself to the children of Israel, He will not fail to work out His purposes through and for them. Again, to shift the basis of the doctrine from the prophets to Moses and assign its first promulgation to him is not to solve the problem, but merely to remove it to a different period. Whence did Moses derive this belief? And this would not tell us why this doctrine, even if we suppose it was cherished in secret through the age of the Judges and so was inherited by the prophets, came to dominate their minds and thoughts as it did. Why are they alone receptive of this? What are the conditions which make it the living truth to these few prophets and a fond delusion to every one else?

If a religious belief is to dominate conduct and organize one's views of life, it must have behind it one of three things—an unquestioned prejudice or inherited assumption, a train of reasoned thought, or some vivid inner mental feeling or experience. That this last was the source of the ethical monotheism of the Hebrews is the contention of Chapter V. The prophets experienced Yahweh, His power and His righteousness, within their own souls; in moments of intensest feeling, the belief in His Almighty power and moral uprightness was impressed upon their minds in a way which proved indelible; it governed their conduct, it altered their views of life; and no amount of logic, of evidence, or of opposition, could ever avail to dislodge this confidence from the citadel of their souls. They knew that they had stood in the presence of an Almighty and All-holy Person; hence they were as certain of His existence as of their own.

As the present argument aims at being inductive, it has proceeded up to this point without assuming any special revelation, or any peculiar inspiration in the Bible; in fact, the conclusions reached thus far appear to hold good, no matter what one's view may be of the ultimate nature of existence. These results are facts of historical and psychological science, and are independent of belief in a Being who may be called 'God', and of a conviction that prayer and religion are realities. But when this scientific analysis has been pushed to its farthest limits without the assumption of any divine intervention, it remains to rise to a higher point of view and to ask what is the value or significance of these facts for one who believes that there is a loving God who wills to take man into fellowship with Himself.

Accordingly, Chapter VI assumes a theistic interpretation of existence, and endeavours, in the light of this assumption, to ascertain the value of the conclusions which have just been reached. The old polytheisms were an obstacle to true communion with God, because they encouraged men to approach their gods with an easy feeling of moral equality with them. Many of the polytheists, it is true, passed through religious states of mind of great intensity and were fully convinced that they had been in communion with

a divine being ; yet these states always had the effect of confirming them in the polytheistic beliefs with which they had long been familiar. There seems to be no reason, then, to refuse to accept the natural explanation of these mental states as being due to what is commonly called an ' uprush ' from the subconscious self.

This explanation, however, does not hold good of the experiences of the mono-Yahwists, because, as will be seen below, there was nothing in their education or environment to suggest to them the truth of the idea that there is but one holy God. These men were, as a result of their peculiar religious states of mind, led to a belief which was wholly at variance with all the logic, the prejudices, and the mental habits of their day, but one which later critical observation and reflection has shown to possess a sound claim to be the truth. These experiences, then, in which a sense of the presence of one Almighty All-holy God was indelibly impressed upon the souls of men who breathed the atmosphere of the polytheistic stage of culture, bear every mark of real communion with God. If these are not cases of true religious intercourse, then either such intercourse is impossible, or it has never yet been enjoyed by man. And if these are instances of true Religion, they also constitute a self-Revelation of God.

That such states of mind should have occurred at all is remarkable enough ; but that they should have been confined to one race and always associated with the one divine Name of Yahweh is even more worthy of consideration. It seems to imply a definite choice of this Name and of the race and religious system attached to it, to be the medium of the revelation of God and the means of carrying out His purposes for the world. And when we recall how, as a result of the continuation of these experiences in Israel for generation after generation, the whole nation was at last brought round to the beliefs of the mono-Yahwists, and its whole outward system reconstructed with a view to expressing and maintaining the truth that there is but one Holy God and that Israel is His people ; and how at length, this monotheistic religion, under the influence of the greatest Figure in man's religious history, gave birth to a new society

which claimed to be heir to all the privileges of the old, and yet was freed from all its national limitations and imperfections ; and how that new society is with us still as a vital force ; we must feel that there is good reason to think that the ancient religion of the Hebrews was chosen to be the matrix of a divinely authorized system of religion which should include all the world of mankind within its fold in one universal self-conscious brotherhood.

Chapter VII adduces another consideration which supports this view. The experiences of the prophets were the source of the belief that an Almighty God had pledged Himself to Israel ; this belief again engendered another—that some day this God would intervene to manifest Himself and His union with Israel in the eyes of all mankind. The Messianic Hope was based on the belief that the religion and religious fellowship of the people of Israel had been chosen by a God who is Almighty, and endowed by Him with peculiar religious privileges. Did this Almighty God manifest Himself, as the prophets pledged their word that He would, in connexion with the Jewish religion ? Did these fond beliefs of the Hebrew prophets substantiate themselves in the fulfilment of that Hope to which they gave birth ? In answer to this we are able to point to Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew, and claiming to be the fulfilment of the Messianic Hope. Chapter VIII discusses the relation of Jesus to the religion of the Jews. But the substance of this chapter has already been touched upon in the Preface.

It is not likely that we shall ever return to the belief in verbal inspiration. But it is the contention of the present work that there are grounds, other than those of the authority of our Lord, for taking up essentially the same attitude towards the religion of the Old Testament which He assumed ; furthermore, if we cannot use the text of the Old Testament as the *ipsissima verba* of God, we can obtain a clear idea of that system of which Jesus the Messiah is the Head.

III

The point of departure in the argument of this volume is the essentially different character of the two kinds of monotheism—the Hebrew and the Greek—and the essentially different mental processes by which they were reached. It may not be out of place to state that the view taken here differs widely from that of many modern writers on the evolution of religion. Let us see how this transition from polytheism to monotheism is treated by some of them. It is a fundamental principle with the students of the science called ‘Comparative Religion’, that religion is one great fact assuming so many differing embodiments in so many different places and periods.

‘We start, then, with the assumption that religion is a thing which has developed from the first, as law has, or as art has.’¹

‘The presumption is that here as everywhere else, the higher forms have been evolved out of lower forms, and that monotheism has been developed out of a previous polytheism. Religion is an organism which runs through its various stages, animism, totemism, polytheism, monotheism. The law of continuity links together the highest, lowest, and intermediate forms.’²

‘What do we imply when we speak of development? In the first place, we imply that the object undergoing development is a unity; that the changes we observe are not like those that proceed from the caprices of fickle man, as the clothes we wear change with the freaks of fashion; that the oak already potentially exists in the acorn, and the man in the child. The one does not merely succeed or supersede the other, but the one grows out of the other. Development is, to quote an American scholar, “a continuous progressive change according to certain laws and by means of resident forces!”’³

There undoubtedly is a point of view from which the religious life of man may be viewed as a unity; and again, it certainly is quite possible to trace certain laws and observe certain resident forces operating in the process of change. But it may be questioned whether the passages

¹ Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 6.

² Jevons, *Introduction to History of Religion*, p. 382.

³ Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, i 29 f.

quoted above do not need some modification as applied to the transition from polytheism to monotheism. It is, for instance, quite possible to see how, under the influence of ascertainable conditions, the religion of one race after another developed from one stage to another up to an advanced polytheism. But obviously, one cannot think of a number of different races developing beyond polytheism to monotheism, simply because only two races ever passed into a permanent monotheism, and all others who have made the transition have borrowed from them. One cannot help thinking that the desire to discover the working of universal laws operating on a large scale has somewhat blinded the eyes of scientists to the real facts. One can say that the monotheism of Plato and Aristotle 'succeeded' or 'superseded' the old polytheistic religion of Greece; but one can scarcely think that it 'grew out of' that polytheism as the man develops from the child; for the fact is that Greek monotheism was the outcome of a process of philosophical reflection which not only had its roots quite outside the old religion, but also stood in direct antagonism to that religion and brought about its downfall. It is, of course, true that polytheism came first and monotheism came after it; but to say that polytheism 'developed into' or 'gave birth to' monotheism is about as true as to say that the red man of America 'developed into' or 'gave birth to' the people of the United States and the Dominion of Canada; the fact is that a new intellectual force arose which first caused polytheism to appear impossible, and then suggested the reality of monotheism.

The essential truth of this statement is not in any way altered by the fact that the rites of the old religion continued to be practised till long after the death of Plato and Aristotle, nor by the fact that even men who accepted the new views conformed outwardly to the old rites. Those strata of society in which polytheism continued to be a reality were not yet infected with the new ideas; and the philosophers who conformed to the state religion did so in a spirit which practically denied its truth. The one thing which survived the wreck of polytheism was the religious

nature of man, which continued to demand satisfaction as before ; and hence, in so far as one can speak of any development persisting through this transition, it is a development of the inner religious nature of man alone, not of the outward manifestations of religion.

To treat the transition to monotheism as though it were traceable to the same set of causes in the case of the Hebrews as in the case of the Greeks is to confuse and obscure the process in both. To all minds which fully accepted the Greek monotheism, the outward forms of polytheism ceased to have any important significance ; but amongst the Hebrews, the old traditional forms of ceremonial and organization, common to many ancient religions, were not swept away, but transfigured and endowed with a higher significance. Here alone can one speak of a development of the outward manifestations of religion, since here alone did outward forms persist as matters of real importance.

It will probably be pointed out that these are not the only cases of monotheistic belief ; but for the purposes of this argument they are the only two which need be considered, because, with one possible exception, all others have either, like Mohammedanism, borrowed from them, or else have failed to achieve permanence. So far as I can discover, the other monotheisms are as follows : (1) A primitive belief in an all-Father or great Spirit, of which Andrew Lang finds evidence among many savage tribes, and which he says became corrupted into different forms of polydemonism and polytheism.¹ With this may be grouped the simple monotheism, the worship of T'ien or Shang Ti, said to have existed in China in the earliest times of which there are any historic traces.²

(2) The monotheism of Akhnaton in Egypt and the monotheistic tendencies visible in the speculations of the Babylonian priests and astrologers. The former of these disappeared as quickly as it sprang into existence, and the

¹ Cf. Lang, *The Making of Religion*, pp. 185-253, and *Magic and Religion*, pp. 15-45.

² Giles, *Encyc. Brit.*, Ed. XI. vi 174 ; and *Religions of Ancient China*, pp. 7-25.

latter was never more than a tendency towards monotheism. Both are touched on in Chapter I (see pp. 19–21).

(3) The belief of the Chuhra described by Mr. Youngson in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.¹ I am informed by Dr. Estlin Carpenter, of Manchester College, Oxford, that these are a class of Indian scavengers who feed on carrion and vermin; hence they can hardly be reckoned to be of a very high spiritual type. They seem to owe much of their faith to Mohammedanism. Mr. Youngson notes that they are rapidly becoming absorbed by Christianity.

(4) The doctrine of the Amida Buddha as held by the great Shin-Shu sect, founded by Shinran, in Japan, early in the thirteenth century. The Amida is not, of course, Creator, for Buddhism contains no room for such a conception as that of creation; he is rather a way of escape, a means of salvation, from the effects of Karma. He is the Buddha of Boundless Light and Boundless Life, who presides over a Paradise in the Pure Land, where those who have put their trust in him will enjoy for ever an existence of unalloyed bliss. His worshippers are forbidden to worship any other than Amida.²

It is not denied that this doctrine, as it is set forth in a modern Buddhist writing called *The Praises of Amida*,³ has been influenced by contact with Christian thought. And it is still being debated whether even the original teaching of Shinran may not be an echo of the Nestorian Christianity which co-existed with Buddhism in China for several centuries before the appearance of the Shin-Shu sect.⁴ But whatever the origin of this doctrine of Amida Buddha may have been, it certainly was not due to the inner experience of an Almighty and All-holy Person, such as the Hebrew prophets enjoyed. Nor can one say that the teaching of the Shin-Shu

¹ s. v. Chuhra.

² See Estlin Carpenter, in *The Quest*, April and July, 1910, and in *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1906; Troup, in *Hibbert Journal*, No. xiv; Lloyd, *Transactions of Oriental Society of Japan*, vol. xxii 413–28.

³ Translated by Arthur Lloyd, and published at Tokyo.

⁴ Cf. Lloyd, *Shinran and his Work*, pp. 4, 5: *The Praises of Amida*, pp. 141–8; Mrs. Gordon, *Messiah, the Ancestral Hope of the Ages*, Tokyo.

sect—though it is the richest and most popular sect in Japan to-day—has played any important part in the upward progress of the human race.

None of these monotheisms, even if it be granted that they are all worthy of the name, are in any way responsible for that permanent belief in one God only, which is characteristic of the religious life of the West. Hence for the purposes of the argument of this book, as contained in Chapter VI, they need not be further considered.

But to return to the scientific students of religious phenomena. It seems to be the common supposition that 'religion and civilization advance together ; according as the civilization is in any people so is its religion.'¹ This may be true of the Greeks, whose increasing intimacy with nature led them to a belief in one God. But it is not true of the Hebrews. For at the time when the prophets were proclaiming their monotheism, the Hebrew nation was still in that stage of civilization which everywhere else was accompanied by a polytheistic belief. Their art, education, politics, and law, their conception of causation, their way of conceiving of the universe, and even their moral codes and their ideas of the life after death, were the same in kind with those which everywhere else were characteristic of polytheism. The advance the prophets made was not the work of superior reasoning powers, nor of a more accurate knowledge of the facts of existence, but involved a process wholly different from a psychological point of view—a vivid inner mental experience.

If one must protest against the assumption that in the advance to monotheism religion everywhere progresses according to the same laws, one need have no quarrel with the methods used in the scientific study of religion. The only method which can satisfy an age which lives by scientific knowledge is to push the psychological and historical analysis back to its farthest limits, to trace the sequence of facts back to their most elementary beginnings in the minds of men, without assuming any such factor as a special dispensation or a miraculous intervention ; when this factor

¹ Menzies, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

is introduced, scientific analysis and investigation come to an end. But when the scientific study of causes has been carried back as far as it can conceivably go, it is not necessary on this account to rule out as inconceivable the whole idea of a special divine revelation. The probability of a special revelation must depend on whether, when the scientific process is over, there are facts and considerations which make such an intervention appear as part of a moral and intelligible system of progress.

Again, to begin with the assumption that one religion is true and all others false, and to review the facts in the light of this assumption, is not the method pursued in this book. The scientific student has nothing whatever to do with such distinctions ; his duty is to observe, classify, and relate all the data which come before his notice ; to begin by distinguishing them into right and wrong or into true and false is as meaningless in the study of religion as it is in the study of astronomy. But religion is something more than a mere natural science like astronomy ; the religious life of man implies and depends on a certain interpretation of the meaning of existence ; its outlook cannot be confined to one limited sphere of natural phenomena, as is the case with any special science such as astronomy. If a man decides for himself that there is no God, his attitude towards astronomical science will not be greatly altered ; it will still express a truth to him ; but his attitude towards religion must be different, since he must now hold that religion is a delusion. There is, then, a higher point of view from which to see the facts of religion ; and from this higher point of view distinctions of true and false have a real meaning. If, then, one begins by ignoring all ideas of divine revelation and all distinctions of truth and falsehood, it would be a profound mistake to erect this limitation into a hard-and-fast dogma and say that a special revelation is inconceivable, and that it is impossible that there can be any point of view from which one religion can be termed true and others misleading.

CHAPTER I

POLYTHEISM AND THE GREEK MONOTHEISM

THE first task must be an attempt to define the terms to be used and to obtain some idea of the nature of the problem to be solved. Fortunately it is not necessary to delve into the origin of religion, nor even to attempt a philosophical definition of it. For the present purposes it will be sufficient to see that 'religion', as that term is commonly used by the scientific students of religious phenomena, involves at least two elements. It involves (1) a belief in the existence of one or more unseen personal beings possessing power over man or his environment; and also (2) a desire to enter into personal relation with these unseen beings. Wherever these two elements are present, we find a set of historical and psychological phenomena to which the term religion is usually given. If either is entirely absent, there is no religion. It is true that one element is not often found without the other; but the two are not only separable in fact, but for the sake of clearness must be carefully distinguished in thought. A man may believe in the existence of one or more unseen personal beings without desiring to enter into personal relations with them; or he may experience the desire in even an acute form and yet believe that to satisfy it is impossible, because he thinks there are no such personal beings at all.

The first element, the belief that there are unseen beings who possess power over man and his environment, represents an intellectual attitude towards the nature of existence. It has been well said, 'a metaphysic of a conscious or unconscious kind always goes side by side with religion.'¹ In other words, religion implies a belief about the con-

¹ Dorner, *Grundriss der Religionsphilosophie*, p. 51, quoted by Ladd, *Philosophy of Religion*, i 274.

stitution of the universe ; the polytheistic worshipper of many unseen beings believed that the universe was controlled by many independent wills of limited power ; he who believes in the existence of one Being only, believes that his whole destiny and environment are controlled by a single supreme Will or Spirit.

The second element, the craving or desire for fellowship with the divine, appears to be a constant factor in human nature. As man is by nature a social animal who seeks human fellowship to round out his life and give scope for the development of all his faculties, so also, for the same reason, he seeks to enter into relationship with the unseen being or beings around him. The religious instinct appears to be part of his psychological make-up. It is absent only in individuals, never in a whole race. Men are always religious except where they have abused their religious capacities or have consciously argued themselves out of them.¹ In every form of religion, animistic, polytheistic, or monotheistic, this craving for divine fellowship is a constant unvarying element. What has in the course of time varied is the number of the unseen persons with whom men have sought to satisfy their religious natures ; in the polytheistic age they naturally turned to worship the many beings in whom their view of the nature of things led them to believe ; in the present age, they turn to one and one only, because their knowledge of the universe teaches them that there is but one and one only in whom satisfaction can be found.

It is of importance for the purpose in hand to make this distinction clear, because it shows that the second or emotional element in religion may safely be neglected in studying the transition from polytheism to monotheism. This element has remained constant throughout every change ; the factor which needs to be investigated is the intellectual element, the causes which made a belief in more than one unseen spiritual being so deep-rooted in the minds

¹ Cf. Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 30 ; Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, ii 230-3 ; Jastrow, *Study of Religion*, 191-7 ; Ladd, *Philosophy of Religion*, i 277, 289 f.

of the polytheist, and the causes which have since made that belief impossible.

The question should not be raised in the form of why there were many gods then and only one God now; it may be reduced to simpler terms still. A god is an object of worship, and the question to be dealt with is not why worship was offered either then or now; it is offered now for the same reason as it was offered then, because men experienced a desire to enter into personal relations with the beings on whom they felt themselves to be dependent. To introduce the word 'god' therefore, is to introduce an unnecessary element. The real problem is to find out why the men of that age believed so intensely in the existence of a large number of independent unseen persons, and why a belief in more than one such being has since become so wholly inadequate and appears so entirely absurd. When this has been done, the causes of the transition from polytheism to monotheism have been fully explained.

II

The polytheism of the ancients appears to us of the present day to be so manifestly inadequate and so transparently absurd, that we are apt to think, either that it was never seriously believed in, or else that those who did believe in it were incapable of following out the simplest process of reasoning. The impression that it was not taken seriously is perhaps due to the fact that so many people derive all their knowledge of polytheism from the pages of Greek and Latin writers of the classical period. But when they flourished, polytheism had obviously already passed through a period of decline and lost its grip upon the best minds. If we would see it in its pristine vigour, if we would understand what a power it could be in the hearts and minds of men, we must go back behind the Greek philosophers and dramatists to Homer and Hesiod, or better still, to ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia. No one can read the Babylonian Penitential Psalms, for instance, without realizing that they are written by men

who are in deadly earnest, quite as much in earnest as the Hebrew psalmists. These men are not performing a ritual which tradition and policy call for, but which the intellect has long since abandoned as childish ; there is no laughing in the sleeve, no suspicion that what is being said and done is not the very truest truth. Polytheism is here a grim and terrible reality ; and if we imagine that it would have been seen at once to be an absurdity if only the meaning of the word ' monotheism ' had been whispered in the ear, we make a great mistake. The fact is that the bare conception of a single supreme god was present to the minds of the Babylonians and other polytheists, and was often upon their lips. But it was never taken seriously. The conception of monotheism was there, but no one believed in it. The traditional polytheism was apparently so deeply rooted in their minds as the one really credible form of religion, that monotheism appeared to have little or nothing to recommend it. A few examples will make this clear. Here is part of a Babylonian hymn to the moon-god, Nannar :

O lord, chief of the gods, who on earth and in heaven alone
is exalted.

Father Nannar, lord of increase, chief of the gods,

.

Father Nannar, whose sovereignty is brought to perfection,
chief of the gods.

.

Lord, thy divinity, like the distant heaven and the wide
ocean, is full (?) of fear.

Ruler of the land, protector of sanctuaries, proclaimer of
their name.

Father, begetter of the gods and of men, establishing
dwellings and granting gifts.

.

Father, begetter of everything . . .

Lord, proclaiming the decisions of heaven and earth,
Whose command is not set aside.

.

No god reaches to thy fullness.

In heaven who is exalted ? Thou alone art exalted.

On earth who is exalted ? Thou alone art exalted.

.

Lord, in heaven is (thy) sovereignty, on earth is thy sovereignty. Among the gods, thy brothers, there is none like thee.

O King of Kings, who has no judge superior to him, whose divinity is not surpassed by any other!¹

It will be observed that in this hymn Nannar is said to be 'chief of the gods, who on earth and in heaven alone is exalted', 'begetter of gods and men', 'begetter of everything', 'Lord proclaiming the decisions of heaven and earth, whose command is not set aside', 'King of Kings, who has no judge superior to him, whose divinity is not surpassed by any other.' It cannot be said that the conception of a single supreme deity lies very far from the thought of this author. Does the Old Testament itself contain stronger expressions of the sole sovereignty of Yahweh? If we could take these expressions seriously and suppose that the poet really meant what his words imply, we would have to label him a monotheist. But the degree of seriousness to be attached to these phrases will readily be perceived when it is noted that the same flattering terms are addressed to several of the greater gods. If Nannar is 'chief of the gods', so also is Asshur and so also is Ishtar. If the command of Nannar 'alone exalted in heaven and earth', is not set aside, no more is that of Nebo; and if Nannar's divinity is surpassed by none, Nebo, 'supreme in heaven,' knows no rival. Is Nannar 'begetter of gods and men' and 'of everything'? Asshur is 'Creator of Shamash, maker of mountains; Creator of the gods, progenitor of Ishtar'.

Thus a hymn addressed to Nebo runs as follows :

O Lord ! To thy power there is no rival power,
O Nebo ! To thy power there is no rival,
To thy house, E-zida, there is no rival,
To thy city, Borsippa, there is no rival.

.....
Thy command is unchangeable like the heavens.
In heaven thou art supreme.²

¹ Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 303 f.

² Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

And another in honour of Asshur :—

Mighty chief of the gods, omniscient :
 Honoured, exalted lord of gods, fixer of destinies.
 Ashur, mighty lord, omniscient :
 . . . Ashur, powerful chief of the gods, lord of countries.

Forever let me exalt his power,
 Mightily wise leader of the gods, illustrious.
 Creator of Shamash, maker of mountains ;
 Creator of the gods, progenitor of Ishtar.¹

And again a hymn to Ishtar :—

. goddess of goddesses,
 Ishtar, queen of all peoples, guide of mankind.

 Mighty and sovereign art thou, supreme is thy name,
 The light of heaven and earth, valiant daughter of Sin art
 thou,
 Bearer of weapons, arrayed for battle,
 Controlling all laws, clothed with the crown of sovereignty.
 O lady, exalted is thy rank, supreme over all the gods !²

With these may be compared the terms in which Shamash
 and Marduk are addressed :

O Shamash ! Supreme judge, great lord of all the world
 art thou ;
 Lord of creation, merciful one of the world art thou.³

Great King, lord of the lands,
 Firstborn son of Ea, who is powerful in heaven and upon
 earth,
 Marduk, great lord of men, and king of the lands, god of
 gods,
 Prince of heaven and earth, who hath not his like,
 Darling of Anu and of Bel.

.
 Marduk, King of heaven and earth.

.
 Heaven and earth are thine.⁴

¹ Jastrow, in *Hastings's D. B.*, v 565.

² Ib. 566 b.

³ Jastrow, *Religion*, &c., p. 301.

⁴ Rogers, *Religion of Babylonia*, p. 175.

Or, to take one example from the Egyptian religion :

‘ Praise be to thee, Amon Rē, thou bull that art in Heliopolis ; lord of Karnak . . . thou Ancient One of the heavens, and most ancient upon earth, lord of law, father of the gods . . . who hast made the higher and the lower (meaning perhaps the celestial bodies and mankind), and who givest light to the world, who makest a prosperous voyage through the heavens, thou blessed King Rē, supreme over the world, thou that art rich in power, full of strength. . . . Praise be to thee, thou creator of the gods, thou that didst lift up the heavens and tread down the earth. . . . Thou lord of eternity, that didst create the eternal . . . thou comely King that art crowned with a white crown, thou lord of splendour that createst light, to whom the (very) gods vouchsafe praise. Praise be to thee, Rē, lord of right, whose holiness is hidden, thou lord of the gods ; thou art Kheperi in thy vessel ; at thy command the gods arose ; thou art Atum that didst create mankind. Thou only art he that created whatsoever is ; men came forth from thine eye, and the gods from out of thy mouth. . . . Praised be thou that didst create all this. Thou King, supreme among gods, we worship thee because thou didst make us, we extol thee because thou hast fashioned us ; we bless thee because thou dwellest among us.’¹

‘ There is a distinct strain of *monotheistic* sentiment. But it is only sentiment ; for in practice the worship of the ancient gods was clung to more firmly than ever, while, by the side of Amon, Re-Horus of Heliopolis and Ptah of Memphis retained their high place in the Egyptian Pantheon and were extolled in hymns similar to this.’²

It seems clear that the bare conception of a supreme god, the source of all existence and power, was not absent from the minds of these writers. But the fact that so many different gods were all alike addressed in these same terms of exalted adulation becoming to a monotheistic belief shows equally clearly that it was just this monotheistic conception which was not taken seriously ; it had no logical cogency behind it ; it did not grip the intellect or govern thought and conduct. It was the polytheistic conception which dominated their minds and actions, which to them represented the real truth necessary to salvation

¹ Steindorff, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 66, 67.

² *Ib.*, cf. also Weigall, *Akhnaton, Pharaoh of Egypt*, pp. 86 f.

and on which they based their conduct. Deep down in their hearts they knew, or they thought they knew, that their welfare was dependent on more than one unseen personal being ; the ascription of universal dominion to so many of them was merely a piece of inexpensive flattery which no one mistook for serious truth. They knew quite well that the power of each god was limited by the power of his colleagues, but still it was not impossible to ascribe universal sovereignty to each and all of the greater gods, and it was a sound policy to avoid too much partiality. In the polytheism of the ancient East, therefore, we are dealing with something which appeared to the men of that day to be the final truth. The monotheistic conception had for them much the same degree of reality as attaches to our conception of a centaur or a mermaid ; as a form of religion, it was about as credible to them as polytheism is to us.

With the results of recent historical and archaeological research before him, no thoughtful man will dismiss them all as a pack of fools or a crowd of children. The men who built up the ancient civilizations on the Nile and the Euphrates, the men who organized and governed the empires of the East, were neither fools nor children. The strength of polytheism did not lie in the absence of intellectual ability in its devotees. We have little reason to think that the constitution of the human mind was fundamentally different in those days from what it is now, or that it was then without any powers of reasoning. Men could and did reason then with as much frequency as they do now ; and if they reasoned incorrectly more often than now, this was not due to any innate inability to reason correctly, or to any fundamental distortion of their mental faculties, but rather to certain other conditions. In order to reason correctly one thing at least is necessary, an adequate supply of data accurately observed ; and it is safer to have a knowledge of the principles of logic, of the conditions on which correct thoughts depend. It was just the absence of these two things which kept the ancient world in darkness. If they reasoned at all on the nature of the powers which lie behind phenomena,

they did so on the basis of an inadequate supply of data, many of which, moreover, were inaccurately observed ; and they had not yet developed the critical habit. When they reasoned on other subjects, which did not require such a large range of observation, they did not do so badly. It must not be supposed, of course, that the ancient polytheism was in any sense a product of reasoning ; it was not by any means the result of a conscious reasoned process, but rather of certain spontaneous assumptions inherited from a remote past and never consciously formulated. But it was supported by reason to this extent, that, as will be seen more clearly later on, if a mind which had not yet thrown off these inherited spontaneous assumptions set out to inquire into the causes of things, it could not but be confirmed in its inherited polytheistic belief ; unless, indeed, it was guilty of a violent logical aberration. The more correctly the polytheist reasoned, the more convinced would he be of the truth of polytheism ; provided, of course, that he set out without questioning the basic assumptions of polytheism. What, then, were these basic assumptions ?

Let us try to understand the polytheist's idea of the natural world around him. One must not suppose that he found nothing but chaos and confusion in it. Human life can exist only on the presupposition that things will continue to happen in the future in much the same way as they have done in the past. The farmer sows in hope that the seed will sprout and ripen as before ; the herdsman expects that his cattle will reproduce themselves, each according to its own kind ; even the hunter lays his snares in the belief that the habits of animals will continue unchanged ; while the arts of warfare are based on the belief that the nature of man will remain the same. All men expect that children will grow to maturity and then die ; that the sun will rise and the moon go through her phases, each in due course. In a very primitive stage it seems probable that such regularities as these were counted on more by instinct, by unconscious habit, than by any process of induction. Still the fact remains that some order and regularity must have been recognized by the polytheists.

Again, if we inquire into their conception of causation, their idea of how things are made to happen, it would be a mistake to suppose that they had no idea of natural causation, of the fact that one event may follow another without the intervention of a personal will between them. Nor is it true that they had no idea of the uniformity of nature, of the principle that one may expect the same cause to be followed by the same effect. But if we were to say that they had no idea of the universality of natural causation, we should touch the vital point. For instance, the Australian blackfellows are wont to put a sod in the fork of a tree exactly facing the setting sun, in order to retard his descent and so lengthen the course of the day.¹ We have here first of all a recognition—albeit unconscious—of natural causation. The man does not himself stop the sun; he uses one force or power to influence another, and what transpires between the sod and the sun is an impersonal, or, as we call it, a ‘natural’ process. This kind of magic is primitive man’s science. Moreover, we have an unconscious recognition of the principle of the uniformity of nature, i.e. every time the sod is put in the branches of the tree, the sun is retarded; the same cause is followed by the same effect. But in the third place, the savage does not recognize the continuity of natural causation. The blackfellow himself initiated the process of causation, and unless he had put the clay in this position it would have had no power to bring about the result he desired. He is not altering the conditions of the working of laws which he knows to work independently of himself; he it is who initiates the train of causation to accomplish his own purposes.

Again, to take another illustration which will advance us further on our way. Any race engaged in agriculture can scarcely fail to notice that moisture is necessary to a harvest. Here we have the idea of the uniformity of nature. We have also the idea of natural causation; what takes place between the rainfall and the sprouting of the crops is a natural process. But here again, primitive

¹ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, ed. 1900, i 118.

man did not grasp the principle of the continuity of natural causation. It was no more easy for him to analyse the conditions on which a rainfall depends, than it is for the average man to-day. We know it depends on natural causes, not because the majority of us know what those causes are, but because others have told us so. But the savage, having no one to tell him this, took refuge in the thought of the action of a personal will, either that of a human rain-maker, or that of an unseen spiritual being.

The constitution of nature is such that there are some facts of natural causation which impress themselves upon the least observant. And the average uninstructed person is able in many cases to trace the process through a series of interconnected causes and effects, even though he may not always do so quite correctly. But eventually there comes a point beyond which he cannot analyse further ; a point at which his train of natural causation comes to an end, because, out of all the numberless phenomena which have preceded this last cause, he cannot pick out those which alone are responsible for it. When this occurs, we in our day call in the specialist ; but primitive man, having no specialist to summon, supposed that these effects were due to a personal will not unlike his own.

‘ In the period of animism every event whatever which arrests attention and demands explanation is explained as being due to personal agency and personal power. . . . The question never is, what caused this event ? It always is, who did this thing ? ’¹

That is to say, there are some trains of natural causation so self-evident and of such frequent occurrence, such as the death of an animal from an arrow in its heart, that they are accepted as a matter of course and never arrest attention. But in cases where the natural sequence was not a matter of daily familiarity to which he had become thoroughly habituated, primitive man had not learned to go in search of it, because he had never realized that there was in every case a natural cause to be found. He never asked what caused this event ? Without attempting to

¹ F. B. Jevons, *Transactions of Third Congress of Religion*, i 78.

weigh the grounds for doing so, he supposed it was due to a personal will. To quote the same writer again :

‘ All changes whatever in the universe may be divided into two classes, those which are initiated by man and those which are not ; and it was inevitable from the first that man should believe the source and cause of the one class to be Will, as he knew it to be the cause and source of the other class of changes.’¹

Of course, one ought not to think of the polytheist as going consciously in search of natural causes and as taking refuge in the idea of a divine intervention only when he failed to find them. One ought to conceive the matter rather in this way. The polytheist inherited a spontaneous belief in the existence of an indefinitely large number of unseen beings, and to their operation he habitually ascribed all that he saw happening around him. But some events are constantly followed by others of so striking a character that the two cannot fail to arrest attention as coming one after the other, and hence they become associated together in memory, and one is not thought of without the other. The one becomes the sign and symbol which suggests the other, and the presence of the second does not appear to require further explanation than the presence of the first. When we speak of the rain as being recognized to be the natural cause of the harvest, this is what is meant ; the two have become so closely associated together that the mind of the polytheist did not feel the need of a personal will to explain the appearance of the second.

Again, those regularities in nature on which he counted in his plans for the future² were always referred to the same source, a personal will. At first, no doubt, they were accepted as facts, and did not appear to require any explanation ; but when men became more conscious of them, they were assigned not to the very nature of the things themselves, but to the operation of personal wills. Each great department of nature was supposed to be controlled by a deity whose will it was that things should happen according to this usual pattern.

¹ *Introduction to History of Religion*, p. 22.

² See above, p. 9.

The chief difference, then, between our view of causation and that of the polytheist is that we emphasize 'natural' causes and minimize personal wills as sources of causation ; but the polytheist laid the emphasis on personal wills and minimized the operation of 'natural' events. And this again explains why the world of man's environment appeared to the polytheist to be so very different from what we know it to be. We have not yet explored the whole of nature or even a large fraction of the whole, but in what has been observed, there are such manifold traces of order, system, and harmony, as to make us feel that if we did know all, we should be able to describe the world as a single organic whole, a vast series of causes and effects which follow each other in unvarying and therefore ascertainable sequences. Our whole experience of life, therefore, leads us to think that all existence must be referable to a single source and explicable by some single principle.

The basic assumption of polytheism, on the other hand, is that the world of man's environment consists of so many fragments, each of which works, whether regularly or irregularly, according to the will of some unseen person. Nature was not a vast machine driven on by impersonal forces resident within itself with all its parts in a relation of dependence upon each other. It was comparable rather to a great piano with an indefinitely large number of key-notes which are continually being played by an indefinite number of personal beings, either gods, men, or demons. Each key would represent a single independent fact of causation, or a train of such facts ; none of them, whether long or short, would work, except when some one or other of those personal wills who alone were able to do so, gave the initial impulse.

And this contrast between the ancient and modern conceptions of nature explains why in the ancient world monotheism appeared incredible and polytheism the only possibility ; and why, at the present day, polytheism is impossible and monotheism remains the only credible basis for religion. All our experience of life leads us to regard the universe as a single whole which must be referred to a single

source. When we believe that this ultimate source, this first cause, is a personal or spiritual existence, we call ourselves Theists; and when we further endeavour to enter into communion with that personal Being, we enter the sphere of religion and call Him God. On the other hand, the polytheist found the world to be peopled with spirits of all kinds, a belief which was confirmed by his experience of many happenings of every day. Hence, when his religious nature cried aloud for satisfaction, he naturally turned to worship one or more of the nearest or most powerful of those unseen beings whose existence seemed to him a self-evident fact.

Such was the basis of polytheism. As an interpretation of life, it held the hearts and minds of its devotees in a tenacious grasp. To say that polytheism satisfied the intellect is perhaps to put the wrong aspect uppermost. The polytheist was probably as little conscious that it satisfied his intellect, as the child is that he lives on air; but if you deprive the child of air, he becomes acutely conscious that something is wrong; just so the intellect of the polytheist would have rebelled against the denial of his gods. When the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed, here was proof positive that even now events of a mental order are taking place within the consciousness of this god. He is angry, or he desires to strike fear into the hearts of men, and so manifests himself in this way. If this is not so, how is the thunder to be explained? Only, of course, by pointing to those atmospheric conditions which invariably precede the thunderstorm. But polytheism occupied an exceedingly well-entrenched position. Men were not yet ready to point out the natural causes of events, because polytheism successfully smothered all inquiry into nature, except where a close attention to facts brought in quick and obvious returns in practical advantage. The basic assumption of polytheism could not be removed except by unearthing the secrets of natural cause and effect; and nature does not yield her secrets except to those who go in search of them with a generous supply of patience and persistence. But polytheism had an answer ready to every inquiry and

a solution applicable to every problem arising out of the happenings of the natural world, a solution which might well turn back even the least indolent of inquirers from the only path which could lead to the escape from polytheism. Everything which happens is due ultimately to the ' fiat ' of one of the many unseen beings with whom the world is peopled. Natural science could hardly be expected to flourish in such an atmosphere ; there was no public demand for it and but little intellectual curiosity to know. One can scarcely be surprised that under such conditions polytheism appeared to be the only credible form of religion.

If the hypothesis of a single will intervening ceaselessly, universally, and immediately, could have been boldly adopted, monotheism might have been reached without travelling the hard road of scientific inquiry till it brought one to the conception of nature as an organic unity. But such a *tour de force* was impossible for several reasons. In the first place, the polytheist inherited the belief in many unseen beings from a very remote past, and such inherited prejudices are not thrown off with a mere shrug of the shoulders. Again, to a superficial observer such as the polytheist must have been, the occasional disappointments and unexpected disasters in which he found himself involved, the strange ups and downs of life, the conflict of the elements, the decay and renewal of vegetation, the rise and fall of nations, must have seemed to bespeak a conflict of will in the powers which lie behind phenomena. And polytheism had another secret of strength even more important than this. It made its devotee feel at home in the world. The polytheist was confident that he understood the universe and that he could bring influence to bear upon things which were clearly beyond his ken and his own physical power.¹ He believed the world to be under the control of beings of like passions with himself who were keenly interested in human affairs and readily accessible to human entreaty. He knew how to handle his gods and to win their favour. They could be influenced through their pockets and through their stomachs like ordinary folk.

¹ Cf. Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life*, pp. 7, 8.

Furthermore, the gods did not leave him without direct communication from themselves. There were authoritatively appointed channels by which their will was made known to men. The priests could tell him the proper ritual to perform and the proper sacrifice to bring; the prophets, shamans, and other inspired persons could inform him as to what would happen in the future; while the augurs could tell him whether the gods were favourable to his plans or not. His deities were always indicating their will to him by one means or another; and often, as in the case of unexpected omens, when such assistance was not even sought for. While there were many malicious and revengeful spirits abroad, yet there were also those whose special business it was to protect and cherish him. Each nation, each city, each community or organization of men, had its own patron god or gods to whom it could look for help and sympathy in return for its service; and in many cases, as in Babylonia, this was extended to the individual as well. For the average man life must have been at most times less troubled by perplexities and anxieties than it is to-day. Polytheism, on the whole, was a comfortable and reassuring belief which smoothed out many of life's minor troubles. Where it proved itself a hopeless failure was on those occasions when a man whose conscience was clear found himself involved in an overwhelming and irremediable calamity. The problem before him was not one of natural law, but concerned the human nature of the gods; what can it be which has offended them and how can they be propitiated? When a man had done his duty by the gods and yet things still persisted in going wrong, in the darkness of that hour polytheism had no help to give him. But after all, such occasions were exceptional, and it was always possible to impute to the unfortunate sufferer a stubborn refusal to acknowledge some secret heinous sin. To abandon these gods, therefore, before the time was ripe was inconceivable. Not only had they the force of immemorial tradition behind them, but to forsake them before there was something better to take their place would have been to go out from a world in which one was comfortably and safely at

home to be a friendless stranger in a land one did not know, exposed to the action of incalculable and uncontrollable forces. Instead of wondering how men could ever have accepted anything so absurd, one ought to be surprised that polytheism was ever dislodged from so strong a strategic position.

III

But polytheism had its weaknesses as well as its strength. First among these may be noticed the fact that the sphere of a god's power was in general marked out by the limits of the dominion of his people. Each independent nation had its own god or set of gods, supreme in their own territory, but not necessarily supreme elsewhere. So long as each nation maintained its independence, so long did this theory of things continue to be satisfactory. But when the balance of power was overthrown by the rise of such empires as those of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome, the old polytheism suffered a shock and had to be accommodated to new facts. From such changes as these, it became evident that the relations between the gods were no longer such as they had previously been supposed to be. From time to time new gods came into the ascendant and many of the old sank into insignificance. These constant readjustments among the gods must have tended to bring some discredit upon the time-honoured polytheism. But they neither abolished it altogether, nor did they bring about the introduction of monotheism. When one people conquered another, the gods of the conquered race did not always pass out of recognition altogether; sometimes their worship was continued by the conquerors in addition to that of their own gods, and more often the conquered people served the deities who had proved the stronger as well as their own. Political conquest always enhanced the prestige of the victor's gods, but it nowhere ended in monotheism. Even the great 'pax Romana' itself contradicted the inference which it seemed to offer; for it was so often disturbed by internal conflict, that it did not bespeak a continuous peace in heaven.

Another and more serious weakness, though even this was not of itself a sickness unto death, was the immoral character of the polytheistic gods. Under the Eastern despotisms, where might was right in the world of politics and justice was the will of the stronger, this defect seems to have occasioned no difficulty. But in Greece it proved a stumbling-block. With the overthrow of the tyrannies in the sixth century B.C., the Greek found himself a member of a city-state composed of a number of free and equal citizens. Hence arose a new conception of the rights of the individual. With their fine sense for what is becoming or fitting for man, the best minds among the Greeks were ready to rebel against the unjust, immoral character of the old gods. 'They be no gods who do aught base,' said Euripides. Sophocles and Aeschylus had done their best to moralize the character of Zeus, but the taint of immorality was so indelibly fixed in the pages of Homer and Hesiod that the task was hopeless. Nothing did more to make men ready to part with the old polytheism, when other conditions had made a change inevitable, than the immoralities of the gods; but even they could never lead all the way to a monotheistic belief.

The really vulnerable spot in the ancient polytheism lay in its very foundation, in the wholly false conception of nature on which it rested. Its position remained unassailable only so long as its basic assumption, that things happen by the immediate intervention of personal wills, remained intact. With this assumption polytheism stood or fell. The escape from its grasp would be effected the moment some substitute was discovered for these personal wills as causes of phenomena, the moment the principle of the universality of natural causation was established. And this was really the only way of escape. It was necessary that the facts and sequences of nature should be observed with an accuracy and over an area sufficient to make the old explanation appear no longer tenable and force the new upon the mind.

IV

This was the work of the Greeks, and perhaps the most valuable of all their gifts to the progress of mankind. It will assist our purpose to see why the necessary observations of natural facts were not made elsewhere. In less highly developed societies, the facts were not observed on a sufficiently large scale, because, there being little or no division of labour or specialization of function, each individual came in contact with one and the same area of nature. Then, again, the facts were not observed with sufficient accuracy and minuteness, because, in the absence of accumulations of capital, there was no considerable body of men with sufficient leisure to concentrate their attention each on the close observation of a single set of phenomena. And finally, when the social state is unsettled and conditions do not remain permanent, it is impossible for knowledge to accumulate by transmission from generation to generation. But all this was slowly reversed with the general progress of society. As civilization advances, men turn more and more of the natural forces and resources of the world to their own use ; human life comes into contact with nature at a larger number of points ; an ever widening area becomes familiar to man, and attention is drawn to an increasing number of the sequences and processes of the natural world ; the accumulation of capital and the organization of industry admit of the close study of special departments ; and a stable government and fixed social conditions enable each generation to profit by the labours of its predecessors. On the one hand, a primitive society could not possibly produce the astronomy and mathematics of the Babylonians and Egyptians : and on the other, the progress of society necessarily involves the accumulation of knowledge.

And this accumulation of knowledge could not fail to affect the ancient polytheistic faith. In Babylonia, for instance, the movements of the stars were studied for generations. It is impossible to go into the details of the many vexed questions concerning the astrological specula-

tions of Babylonian and Egyptian priests ; but it may be said that the principle of every astral religion is that there is a counterpart in the visible world of all that goes on among the gods in heaven. The will and the doings of heaven are to be read in the stars ; hence the importance and advantage of studying the movements of the heavenly bodies. Now no nocturnal observation of the skies can extend over a long period of time without compelling the attention to note the exact regularity and order in which the planets move. And the planets and various portions of the heavens were connected with the various gods ; hence the conclusion may not have been far off that the many gods were not absolutely independent of each other in will and action, but were rather the representatives of some unknown power who resides behind all and directs the whole.¹ This astral doctrine was never a popular belief, but the private possession of the priestly caste. And that the monotheistic conclusion was never clearly drawn even by the priests themselves was probably due to the fact that, outside their own special sphere, nature was to them just what it was to their contemporaries ; and so polytheism remained for them an important factor in the life of the average man. While the sum total of natural knowledge in ancient Babylonia and Egypt was not small, yet no one mind could become conscious of it all, because there was no universality of thought, no common meeting-ground on which it could all be displayed and viewed as a whole.

In Egypt also there appears a cult which some authorities describe as a monotheism based on scientific knowledge. About the end of the fifteenth century B.C. there was set up by King Amenophis IV (Akhnaton) the worship of the solar disk called Aten or Aton. Amenophis claimed universal recognition for this god and proscribed the service of all others. Of this religion, Flinders Petrie says that it does not ' show a single flaw in a purely scientific conception of the source of all life and power on earth '.² It seems more

¹ See Baentsch, *Israelitischer u. altorientalischer Monotheismus*, pp. 19-38.

² *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 54 ; cf. Weigall, *Akhnaton, &c.*, pp. 115-35.

probable, however, that this exclusiveness was a political move on the part of the king against the powerful college of priests of Amon at Thebes. Had it been based on a really scientific conception of nature and causation, that conception, which must have been long in forming, could hardly have been swept away so completely the moment the king was dead, nor would it have been followed so soon by the revival of the old polytheism. Moreover, the cult of Aten was similar to that celebrated in honour of the proscribed gods.¹

But the ancient world, long in labour, at length became ready to give birth to a new order of things, to a new mode of understanding existence; the part of midwife was played by the quick-witted Greeks. Or to vary the metaphor, it was reserved for the Greek genius to break for ever the polytheistic yoke from off the neck of the human race. Several causes contributed to this. The first place of all should perhaps be assigned to the peculiar character or genius of the Greek people themselves with their love of discussion, criticism, and inquiry. 'The mighty upward movement of the national life in the sixth century B.C. unfettered the powers of this most gifted of all peoples,' and 'the democratic development of constitutions in passionate party struggle tended to bring out independence of individual opinions and judgements and to develop the significance of personality'.² Then, again, owing to the physical condition of Hellas, the Greeks were necessarily sailors and travellers. They spread themselves abroad over the littoral of the then known world, and here and there penetrated into the interior; they came in contact with many very varied customs, institutions, and traditions, and unlike earlier travellers, they evinced a quickness to perceive, a fondness for comparing notes, and a readiness to learn what the foreigner could teach. From many different sources they plucked the ripe fruit of the natural science of

¹ Naville, *Ancient Egyptian Faith*, 153-8; cf. Budge, *Gods of the Egyptians*, ii 71-4; Wiedemann, *Religion of Ancient Egyptians*, pp. 35-44; Steindorff, *op. cit.* 56-64.

² Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 24.

the older civilizations and brought it home to aid in the general progress of learning. Nor were their own contributions to the general stock of knowledge of slight importance. If they learned in Babylon and Egypt such astronomical and mathematical science as those ancient empires had accumulated in the course of ages, they also developed these branches of study to a limit far beyond that which their teachers had reached. Their chief contribution seems to have been in the observation of the facts of organic life. If we contrast Greek art with that of Babylon and Egypt; if we contrast the grace and self-restraint of the Parthenon with the brute strength of the pyramids, or the work of a Pheidias or a Praxiteles with the unreal monsters, the winged bulls and eagle-headed men of Babylonia and Assyria, or with the stereotyped conventional figures of Egyptian art; we see at once that the Greeks had a habit of seeing things as they are and of observing the facts of nature such as no other ancient race could equal. Greek sculpture witnesses to an accurate knowledge of the human anatomy, which in turn implies a habit of close and careful observation. And it was in the sphere of medicine especially that the Greeks far outstripped all their contemporaries. At a time when the Babylonians and Egyptians were still at the mercy of the 'medicine-man', or depending upon magic and incantations, the Greeks enjoyed the benefit of the services of a body of physicians who were as remarkable for their sense of honour, duty, and humanity, as for their use of scientific methods. Magic spells and the idea of immediate divine intervention did not disappear all at once from the practice of medicine, but as early as the end of the sixth century B.C. observations of considerable importance regarding the functions of the brain and the mechanism of sensation had already been made. In the middle of the fifth century there appears the figure of Hippocrates, the greatest of Greek physicians. It was characteristic of his school to insist upon the close observation of natural fact in opposition alike to the fantastic speculations of the earliest philosophers and the idea that diseases are due to the spite of an angry god or an unkind

demon. 'As for me,' he writes in his treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, 'as for me, I think that these maladies are divine like all others, but that none is more divine or human than another. Each has its natural principle and none is without its natural cause.'¹ 'None is without its natural cause.' Here is, for the realm of the physician at least, a clear statement of the principle of the universality of natural causation.

The influence of this growing recognition of natural causation made itself felt throughout the course of Greek thought and Greek literature. Herodotus, the father of history, who flourished in the fifth century, accommodated and reduced the myths to fit in with what he thought was possible and natural; but Thucydides, his successor, made a clean sweep of them altogether, and, as Gomperz says, 'obviously never conceived the possibility that he could be suspected of giving credence to an interruption of the course of nature.'² The manner in which the new conception was eating its way into the heart of the popular religion is reflected in the pages of Aristophanes. For the vivid mental life of the old gods, events in the natural world were being pointed to and substituted as the causes of phenomena even in those realms of nature which were commonly held to be the special sphere of divine activity. In the *Clouds* Aristophanes introduces a man named Strepsiades who comes to Socrates for instruction in philosophy, and a part of the dialogue is as follows:—

Socr. These (the Clouds) are your only deities, all else I flout at.

Streps. Hold! Olympian Jupiter—
Is he no god?

Socr. What Jupiter? What god?
Prythee no more—away with him at once!

Streps. Say'st thou? Who gives us rain? answer me that.

Socr. These give us rain; as I will straight demonstrate:
Come on now—When did you e'er see it rain
Without a cloud? If Jupiter gives rain,
Let him rain down his favours in the sunshine.
Nor ask the clouds to help him.

¹ From Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 11; cf. Gomperz, *Greek Thinkers*, i 311 f., 275–315.

² *op. cit.* i 510.

- Streps.*
But hark'ye me, who thunders ? tell me that.
For then it is I tremble.
- Socr.* These, these thunder,
When they are tumbled.
- Streps.* How, blasphemer, how ?
- Socr.* When they are charged with vapours full to the
bursting,
And bandied to and fro against each other,
Then with the shock they burst and crack amain.
- Streps.* And who is he that jowls them thus together
But Jove himself ?
- Socr.* Jove ! Tis not Jove that does it,
But the aethereal vortex.
- Streps.* What is he ?
I never heard of him ; is he not Jove ?
Or is Jove put aside, and Vortex crown'd
King of Olympus in his state and place ?
But let me learn some more of this same thunder.
- Socr.* Have you not learnt ? I told you how the Clouds,
Being surcharged with vapour, rush together,
And in the conflict shake the poles with thunder.
- Streps.*
And tell me of the lightning, whose quick flash
Burns us to cinders ; that, at least, great Jove
Keeps in reserve to launch at perjury ?
- Socr.* Dunce, dotard ! were you born before the flood
To talk of perjury, whilst Simon breathes,
Theorus and Cleonymus, whilst they,
Thrice-perjured villains brave the lightning's
stroke
And gaze the heavens unscorcht ? Would these
escape ?
Why, man, Jove's random fires strike his own fane,
Strike Sunium's guiltless top, strike the dumb oak,
Who never yet broke faith or falsely swore.
- Streps.* It may be so, good sooth ! You talk this well :
But I would fain be taught the natural cause
Of these appearances.
- Socr.* Mark when the winds
In their free courses check'd, are pent and purs'd
As 'twere within a bladder, stretching then
And struggling for expansion, they burst forth
With crack so fierce as sets the air on fire.¹

¹ Tr. Cumberland in Mitchell's edition of *Comedies of Aristophanes*.

The play of course is a burlesque, but a burlesque of something that was real. Socrates is introduced as a representative of a class from whom a practical atheism might be learned; for all the philosophers had explanations of the changes in the weather and other phenomena—explanations in which the idea of direct divine intervention was conspicuous by its absence. Anaxagoras explained that thunder and lightning were produced by heat striking upon clouds. Earthquakes, he said, were caused by the air above striking on that beneath the earth; for the latter movement caused the earth which floats on it to rock.¹ Anaximenes, again, said that 'hail is produced when water freezes in falling; snow, when there is some air imprisoned'.² It is perhaps worth while to quote one of the many strange explanations of the heavens and their movements. 'The heavenly bodies,' says Anaximander, 'are wheels of fire separated off from the fire which encircles the world and enclosed in air. And they have breathing-holes, certain pipe-like passages at which the heavenly bodies are seen. For this reason, too, when the breathing-holes are stopped eclipses occur. And the moon appears now to wax and now to wane because of the stopping and opening of the passages.'³ This appears to us scarcely more credible than the ancient polytheism; but there is a real advance in that the whole cosmic movement is referred to natural causes and not to mental events in the minds of unseen beings.

The old gods were thus slowly driven away from one department of nature after another. It was realized to be impossible to explain events on the theory implied in polytheism. On the one hand, there was too much regularity and order in nature; and on the other, the lives of men were too unequally arranged and too unfairly rewarded to admit of the supposition that everything was controlled by the immediate operations of beings who were so keenly interested in and intimately acquainted with human affairs as the gods of mythology. Above and behind the figures

¹ Hippolytus, *Ref.* i 8, 3, in Burton, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 314.

² Aet iii 4, 1; in Burton, p. 81.

³ Hippolytus, *Ref.* i 6, in Burton, p. 67.

of the gods, there looms the spectre of Fate or Necessity, to which even Zeus must yield. As Weber has well expressed it, experience showed the 'impossibility of explaining all phenomena without exception by capricious wills. The facts of mathematics, because of their universality and necessity, especially defy theological interpretation; how, indeed, can we assume the fact that twice two is four, or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, to be the result of caprice and not of absolute necessity? In the same way the observation of astronomical and physical facts, and their constant regularity and periodicity, gives rise to the idea of a will that is superior to the whims of the gods (*ἀνάγκη, ἀδράστεια, μοῖρα, τύχη*), of an immutable justice (*δίκη, εἰμαρμένη*), of a divine law (*θεῖος νόμος*), of a supreme Intelligence (*θεῖος λόγος, θεῖος νοῦς*).'¹

While this process of banishing the gods from each separate nook and cranny of nature was still in progress, another class of thinkers was at work whose aim it was to explain the origin and the entire scheme of existence as a whole without any reference to the polytheistic deities. A substitute for the activity of the gods had been found in one instance after another; these men sought a substitute for them in accounting for the entire universe and all its parts and processes. This movement began early in the sixth century B.C., and its history is the history of philosophy.

The earliest beginnings of this process of thought will perhaps be most readily understood if we return to a metaphor used to illustrate the polytheistic view of the world. To the polytheist the world was like a vast piano, containing more or less mechanism, no doubt, but still only giving forth its sounds when some person, god, man, or demon, struck the keyboard. But some of the Ionian Greeks of the early part of the sixth century B.C. seem to have become conscious of a multiplicity of sounds which the piano was continually and unceasingly emitting: this constant stream of happenings, they felt, could not be the work

¹ Weber, *History of Philosophy*, p. 20.

of personal beings. Just how much of the mechanism of the piano they had observed, just how much natural knowledge they had acquired, it is impossible to determine exactly. But apparently they had seen enough of the uniform sequences of nature to suggest to them the grand hypothesis, that, after all, the whole thing is to be explained as something the very nature of which is to change and to move. It is not that the personal wills of the gods or of men initiate series of changes ; the key-notes are supposed to work themselves, and the whole thing moves and alters simply because it cannot help doing so. The changes in the universe were found to be sleepless, tireless, universal, and unending. Accordingly, the earliest assumption was that the complicated universe, with which we become acquainted through our senses, is made out of some one primary substance which assumes many different shapes and transforms itself into many apparently different kinds of material ; this process of change is part of its very nature ; the primary substance moves and changes because it is alive ; for in the thought of that day, motion and life meant the same thing.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that once this stage was reached, it was quite impossible to stem the flood of thought and inquiry. When the incubus of polytheism was once removed, curiosity and wonder kept the minds of men constantly on the search for the explanation of things, while pure science and the observation of fact for other than utilitarian purposes received a tremendous impetus. Once the door of inquiry was opened, the eager pursuit never ceased until it grew weary of the puzzle and could find no new solution to suggest. And of course, nature being what it is, each day made the old polytheism appear more and more impossible. Although the earliest philosophers with their theories were like children too pleased with new toys to realize their practical uselessness, yet they knew far too much to dream of having recourse to the old mythology.

‘ Of the first philosophers,’ says Aristotle, ‘ most thought the principles which were of the nature of matter were the only principles of all things ; that of which all things that are

consist, and from which they first come to be, and into which they are finally resolved (the substance remaining, but changing in its modifications), this they say is the element and the principle of things, and therefore they think nothing is either generated or destroyed, since this sort of entity is always conserved, as we say Socrates neither comes to be absolutely when he comes to be beautiful or musical, nor ceases to be when he loses these characteristics, because the substratum, Socrates himself, remains. So they say nothing else comes to be or ceases to be; for there must be some entity—either one or more than one—from which all other things come to be, it being conserved.’¹

Motion, change, the processes of birth, growth, repair, decay, were regarded as the modifications of the primary substance. Thales thought that this one element was Water; Anaximander preferred ‘the Boundless’ (τὸ ἄπειρον); Anaximenes said it was Air. Behind these theories there lay a certain amount of observation of natural fact. Aristotle says that Thales ‘possibly was led to this opinion by observing that the nourishment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated and kept alive by moisture. And that from which all things are generated is just what we mean by their first principle’. Again, of Anaximander we are told that ‘observing the way in which the four elements are transformed into one another, he thought fit to take for the substratum, not some one of them, but rather something else over and above them all. And he did not attribute creation (γένεσις) to any change in this element, but rather to the separating of the opposites occasioned by the eternal movement’.² When once they have formed their hypothesis as to the primal substance, they do not hesitate to use it deductively to explain things which could not be submitted to observation. Thus Anaximander says that ‘something capable of begetting hot and cold was separated off from the eternal at the origin of this world. From this arose a sphere of flame which grew round the air encircling the earth, as the bark grows round a tree.

¹ *Met.* i 3, 983 B, tr. Ross.

² Theophr. fr. 2, *ap. Simplic. Phys.* 24, quoted by Bakewell, *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*, pp. 2, 3, 4.

When this was torn off and enclosed in certain rings, the sun, moon, and stars came into existence'.¹

Anaximenes rejected the abstract 'Boundless' of Anaximander and supposed that Air was the primary substance, explaining that Air 'differs in different substances in virtue of its rarefaction and condensation'. 'When it is dilated so as to be rarer, it becomes fire; while winds, on the other hand, are condensed Air. Cloud is formed from Air by felting (*πίλησις*); and this, still further condensed, becomes water. Water, condensed still more, turns to earth; and when condensed as much as it can be, to stones.'²

Heraclitus was even more deeply impressed with the unending process of change. To him the whole world appeared to be an 'ever-living fire'. This 'Fire' is 'not a material or substance which survived all its transformations, but just the transforming process itself in its ever-darting, vibrating activity, the soaring up and vanishing which correspond to the becoming and passing away'.³ All things are thus in constant change, either on 'the way upward', or on 'the way downward'. The way upward is that part of the process in which all things are transformed into Fire; 'the downward path' is that part in which Fire is transformed into all things; for such is the undying cycle in which all is involved. The world is something more than a vast sea of changes, it is a scene of universal strife and conflict; for Heraclitus regards the change of fuel into Fire, that of Fire into smoke, vapour, water, etc., as a warfare of opposites. The strife of opposites is the father of all. 'The Universe is thus at every moment a unity divided in itself and again re-united, a strife which finds its reconciliation, a want that finds its satisfaction. The essence of the world is the invisible harmony in which all differences and oppositions are solved. The world is Becoming and Becoming is unity of opposites.'⁴

The peculiar doctrines of Parmenides, the founder of the

¹ *Ps. Plut. Strom.* fr. 2, quoted by Burton, p. 66.

² *Phys. Op.* fr. 2; *Hipp. Ref.* i 7, in Burton, p. 77.

³ Windelband, *History of Philosophy*, p. 36.

⁴ Windelband, *op. cit.* p. 50.

Eleatics, were the outcome of a trust in rigorous thinking rather than the result of physical investigation. But his thinking was based upon what was common to those who preceded him ; and, if one admits those presuppositions, his reasoning was sound. Hitherto, the search had been for a single primary substance out of which all else was evolved by a process of change. Existence and substance were assumed to be identical and coterminous. That which is, is that which fills up space. Anaximenes had introduced the idea of the condensation and rarefaction of the primal substance ; but where there is less of the substance, there must be some empty space. And empty space, i.e. what is not, says Parmenides, cannot be thought of ; and therefore cannot be said to be ; for only that can exist which can be thought of, for thought exists for the sake of that which is. The necessities of thought led Parmenides to insist rigorously on the denial of non-Being, by which he meant empty space. And once this is granted, it follows that there can be no motion and no change ; for if there is no empty space, there can be no change. ‘ That which is, is ; and it cannot be more or less. There is, therefore, as much of it in one place as in another, and the world is a continuous, indivisible plenum.’¹ If the senses present us with the appearance of motion, change, and multiplicity, they are merely mocking us ; for all such things are, if one is to follow reason through to its logical conclusion, mere illusions. Parmenides, therefore, denied all motion, all change, all Becoming ; the world is in reality an unchangeable, indivisible, homogeneous body.

A way out of this impasse was suggested by Empedocles of Akragas. If the primary substance be one, homogeneous, and indivisible, and if there is no empty space, motion is inconceivable as Parmenides taught ; because, if one part of the substance could move, it could only be replaced by what is one with itself. But what if the original substance is not one, but many ? What if there are several heterogeneous elements, such as Earth, Air, Fire, Water, which are continually being separated and united with each

¹ Burton, *op. cit.* p. 207.

other ? If this is so, we can preserve both the Being of Parmenides and the Becoming of Heraclitus. The Being is preserved in the four eternal, unchangeable 'roots' or 'elements' of things ; the Becoming is preserved in the increasing process of their mixture, their union and separation. Hitherto it had been assumed that motion is a property of the primary substance. But since Parmenides had denied motion, this factor was brought into prominence, and it now became necessary to explain how it was that the various imperishable elements were put into motion. Empedocles took as an hypothesis the operation of what he called Love and Strife, which predominated alternately, and so caused a uniting and a separation of the four elements to succeed each other in an undying series. But the action of Love and Strife was not purposive. Like the Air, Earth, Fire, and Water, they too were spatial and corporeal, and yet alive, endowed with perceptive and cognitive power.

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae explained things somewhat differently. Instead of the four 'roots' of Empedocles, he postulated the existence of an infinite number of infinitely divisible seeds. There are as many kinds of seeds as there are kinds of sensible objects, and each of them contains within it a portion of every other kind of seed ; but each is that kind of which it contains most. The necessary motion again was obtained not from Love and Strife, but from mind (*νοῦς*), which stepped in to communicate the original rotatory movement out of which the whole present cosmos has developed. Mind is omniscient, almighty, infinite, and self-determined. Yet it is not incorporeal, for there is a greater and a lesser in it, and it is the thinnest of all things and the purest. It is evident that to Anaxagoras the origin of things could not be accounted for except on the hypothesis of the operation of mind. But it seems that he is thinking of some sort of 'mind-stuff,' as it were, rather than of a transcendent personality such as monotheism implies.

Leucippus and Democritus, on the other hand, found it quite unnecessary to assume the intervention of mind. The atoms of Leucippus were all exactly alike in substance and

all indivisible. The multiplicity of different sensible objects was accounted for by the differing size and arrangement of the atoms. These atoms are, and always have been, in motion of themselves. Some of them collided, became entangled with each other, and formed a vortex ; and from this the world, including the phenomena of mind, has resulted.

If we may trust Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates found the world full of what was evidently intended to minister to human well-being. From these evidences of design he drew the monotheistic conclusion that there is one omnipresent, omniscient, and benevolent Being who is the author and source of all that is. Here at last we reach the goal of a clear-cut thoroughgoing monotheism ; and though it was denied by Democritus, it reappears in Plato and Aristotle. Plato regarded the created world as an organic unity, the parts of which work together for the good of the whole.¹ There are, he says, two things which lead men to believe in the existence of the gods. ' One is the argument about the soul, which has been already mentioned, that it is the eldest and most divine of all things, to which motion attaining generations gives perpetual existence ; the other was an argument from the order of the motion of the stars, and of all things under the dominion of the mind which ordered the universe.'² In the Aristotelian system there is one spiritual, transcendent, and self-conscious Being, the pure Form, who is the Final Cause of all generation and change. To return to a simile used before, it is not enough to think of the piano as alive and as moving itself ; it now appears to have a Maker, a Creator, who ordered and planned it thus. Mind is not mere ' mind-stuff ' like other substances with which our senses meet ; it is not merely immanent in the world ; it is transcendent, self-conscious the ultimate ground and cause of all existence.

At its earliest inception, philosophical study appeared to involve the denial of all that could be called ' God '. But Plato explains that this was due to inaccurate observation and thinking, and was not the true conclusion.

¹ *Laws*, x 903 ff.

² *Laws*, xii 966, tr. Jowett.

‘ If a man look upon the world,’ he tells us, ‘ not lightly or ignorantly, there was never any one so godless who did not experience an effect the opposite of that which the many imagine. For they think that those who handle these matters by the help of astronomy and the accompanying arts of demonstration, may become godless, because they see, as far as they can see, things happening by necessity and not by an intelligent will accomplishing good. But what is the fact? Just the opposite, as I said, of the opinion which once prevailed among men, that the sun and stars are without soul. Even in those days men wondered about them and that which is now ascertained was then conjectured by some who had a more exact knowledge of them—that if they had been things without soul, and had no mind, they could never have moved with numerical exactness so wonderful; and even at that time some ventured to hazard the conjecture that mind was the orderer of the universe. But these same persons again mistaking the nature of the soul, which they conceived to be younger and not older than the body, once more overturned the world, or rather, I should say, themselves, for the bodies which they saw moving in heaven all appeared to be full of stones and earth and many other lifeless substances, and to these they assigned the causes of all things. Such studies gave rise to much atheism and perplexity, and the poets took occasion to be abusive.’ ¹

The whole process of thought is due to a changed conception of causation. It is assumed throughout that events are to be accounted for ‘ naturally’, i. e. that they are instances of the working of impersonal causes, not manifestations of mental events even then transpiring within the consciousness of some unseen being. At the beginning of the process they are regarded as involved in the very nature of the primary living substance; in the end they are referred again to mind; not, however, as the immediate results of varying mind states, but as being the product of a long process of natural causation, the whole of which is to be traced ultimately to a single spiritual source.

This change in the conception of causation first robbed polytheism of its cogency by making it cease to be an intellectual necessity, and then made it an intellectual impossibility by showing that it was hopelessly at variance

¹ *Laws*, xii 967, tr. Jowett.

with the facts. Thus polytheism and monotheism changed places. The latter became, for all thoughtful minds, the only possible form of religious belief, while the former was relegated to that limbo of unrealities which now contains the centaur, the mermaid, &c., and which, in the flourishing days of the old religion, used to contain the idea of monotheism.¹

The long process, then, by which Greek monotheism was finally reached was essentially one of observation and reflection. It was arrived at under the impulse to think things out logically and accurately with the help of a growing knowledge of natural fact. The theories of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes may appear to us to be but the wildest and crudest guesses, but they are very much nearer the truth than the earlier polytheism. These men were like carpenters trying to build a house without tools. The conditions and processes of logical thought had not yet been clearly discerned ; and the conceptions by means of which fruitful discussions in the realm of metaphysics can be carried on had not yet been defined. But as these wants were supplied, thought rose to a more adequate explanation of things, and we get the monotheism of Plato and Aristotle. The testimony of Aristotle to this effect is worth quoting. Speaking of the earliest philosophers who derived the universe from a single primary self-moved substance, he says :

‘ When these men and the principles of this kind had had their day, as the latter were found inadequate to generate the nature of things, men were again forced by the truth itself, as we said, to inquire into the next kind of cause. For surely it is not likely either that fire or earth or any such element should be the reason why things manifest goodness and beauty both in their being and in their coming to be, or that those thinkers should have supposed it was ; nor again could it be right to ascribe so great a matter to spontaneity and luck. When one man said, then, that reason was present—as in animals, so throughout nature—as the cause of the world and of all its order, he seemed like a sober man in contrast with the random talk of his pre-

¹ See above, p. 8.

decessors. We know that Anaxagoras certainly adopted these views, but Hermotimus of Clazomenae is credited with expressing them earlier.¹

The traditional polytheism succumbed to the onset of the new conception of nature long before philosophical reflection gave birth to the monotheistic interpretation of existence. Not that polytheism and monotheism belong to two different ages clearly separated from each other by an intervening time-gap ; nor did the philosophers, with the exception of Xenophanes, directly attack the gods of the popular religion. Many of them, as Plato for instance, continued to speak of ' gods ' ; but where this is not a mere concession to popular usage, the beings spoken of as ' gods ' are entirely subordinate spirits, who have little or no influence upon the cosmic development of things and little or no power over man and his destiny. The origin and progress of the world is explained without any reference to the work of these beings. Hence, if the philosophers speak of ' gods ', they mean something quite different from the polytheistic deities of mythology.² Moreover, all minds did not come under the influence of philosophy at one and the same time. The leaven of the new ideas worked its way through society very slowly. And the lower strata were still untouched long after the best minds had come under its influence. The condemnation of Socrates shows that at the beginning of the fourth century B.C. the mass of the Athenians were not yet prepared to accept the new views ; and even among the upper classes there were conservatives like Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Nicias, who refused to part with the old.

V

Before passing to the monotheism of the Hebrews, let us observe what a revolution in religious life this new monotheism involved for every mind which accepted it. What Plato and Aristotle taught was not a religion, but a philosophy ; and the Idea of the Good, the First Cause, was

¹ Aristotle, *Met.* i 3 ; 984 B, tr. Ross.

² Cf. Fairbanks, *Greek Religion*, pp. 325-32

not necessarily an object of worship, and so not necessarily 'God'. But the religious nature of man continued as insistent in its demands as before, and so long as the ultimate ground of Reality was not believed to be material, there was always a possibility of taking up a religious attitude towards it. Hence one may speak of the new God as opposed to the old gods. The change from one to the other involved nothing less than a revolution in the religious life of man. On the one hand, the old gods stood in the strangest kind of contrast to the new God; and on the other, all the traditional outward forms of polytheism were bound to lose their original significance.

In the first place, if the old polytheism could make but a poor appeal to the intellect, it excelled in the satisfaction which it gave to the religious instinct. It supplied its devotees with the certain and assured presence of a number of beings who were readily accessible to human entreaty, and who watched the course of human affairs with a close and interested scrutiny. The existence of these beings was assumed without hesitation and without question. It appeared a self-evident fact. But Plato and Aristotle discovered the monotheistic God after a lengthy process of discussion and inquiry. His existence was very far from being self-evident. The reasoning on which Plato and Aristotle depended was not easy to follow; it might be fallacious; and many, like Democritus and Leucippus, were ready to say that it was so. The old gods appeared to be founded on the rock of self-evident fact; the new God's existence appeared to be open to question.

And again, even if one agreed that He exists, there was still a further query which the religious-minded man had to face. Can one be sure that He takes any interest in His creation in its present evil condition? It was not to be expected that He should be as interested in human beings as they are in Him; but could it be supposed that He cared more for them than for any other part of creation? What a distance separated the old deities from the Pure Form, the First Cause, the Idea of the Good! The old gods, to return once more to a simile used before, sat at the keyboard

of nature, in a higher place no doubt, but still side by side with men ; and since they were supposed to experience the whole vivid range of thought, feeling, and will which was common to man, they were influenced to strike the notes now in this way and now in that by their varying moods and feelings just as though they were men. The motives of these gods were the same in kind with those of men, for their minds were built after the fashion of man. Hence there was a certain intimate comradeship and confidence between the polytheist and his gods, the result of mutual sympathy and understanding.

But how different was the new God of monotheism ! and how great the gulf fixed between Him and mankind ! Man does not sit at the keyboard beside Him ; man is much more truly a very minute part of the creation, at once the product of the cosmic process and at the same time limited and governed by it. His power over nature shrinks almost to nothing ; the best he can do is to take advantage of some of the forces resident in nature and turn them to his own purposes ; and his intellect is lost in the bewildering effort to understand it all.

And again, it is no longer possible to assume with a light heart that God experiences the same range of mental states as man. Obviously, He is not swayed by passing whims and fancies ; His mental life is almost inscrutable ; for He has screened His thoughts and purposes behind the veil of the impersonal laws and forces of nature. And as these laws and forces are unchanging, so too His thoughts and purposes are unchanging. It is manifestly absurd to ascribe to Him an outward form comparable to that of men ; nay more, it is very questionable whether there are any mental faculties in man which can penetrate into the mysterious solitudes of His consciousness. That mutual sympathy and understanding which the old religion supplied so well was strangely absent from the new. Intercourse with the Idea of the Good was largely a matter of intellectual contemplation ; and, if possible at all, it was only for those few pure spirits who climbed the steep ascent of learning.

But the contrast between the old gods and the new God

was nowhere more pointed than in regard to moral conduct and character. Since the gods shared the same mental life as man, the average god was no better and not much worse than the average man ; as there were no absolutely upright men, so there were no absolutely upright gods. But how utterly absurd it was to think of ascribing human passions, weaknesses, and sins to the First Cause, the Pure Form ! He is perfect Beauty and perfect Goodness. For this reason among others it was impossible to identify even the greatest of the old deities with the one God. The personal history of each one of them was too well known. The name Zeus might continue to be used poetically, but every thinker knew that this implied no real continuity with the Zeus of ancient mythology but was an entirely new beginning. Thus the great advance to monotheism triumphed by the complete extermination of the old gods, not one of whom survived.

The religious life of man had to be torn up by the roots and transplanted to a new soil ; it had to learn to cling to something very different from the polytheistic hot-bed in which it had flourished so long. Had not the religious craving or instinct been so strong in man, and especially in such leaders of thought as Socrates and Plato, religion itself might have suffered extinction. In the souls of some no doubt it did cease, but the ineradicable propensities of human nature could not be denied entirely. At first, some conformed outwardly to the state religion and used language which appeared to countenance belief in the existence of one or more of the old deities. Then philosophy took to itself a religious colouring in Neo-Pythagoreanism and Neo-Platonism, or it allied itself with the definite system of religious monotheism supplied by Judaism, an alliance consummated by Philo Judaeus at Alexandria at the beginning of the first century of our era. Finally, the philosophical monotheism, welcomed by such men as Origen and Clement of Alexandria, found a congenial home in that monotheistic system of religion which claimed to be the rightful heir of ancient Judaism, the religion of Jesus Christ. Christianity supplied that which was lacking to philosophical monotheism. It offered a system of outward

observances, a merciful and loving God, and assured means of access to Him ; and when it claimed to have been revealed by God Himself as an authoritative means of salvation, it could point to its ancient scriptures and show that it took its origin in remote ages quite apart from and long before the first beginnings of Greek philosophy. And the claim could not be denied. The Christian system, as the immediate revelation of that one Almighty Person of whose existence philosophers had found the world to be eloquent, became the predominant partner. The alliance once formed was long in manifesting any rift. All through the scholastic age, philosophy continued as the handmaid of Christian theology, until it once more began an independent career with the rise of modern philosophy. But this has taken us far from the proper course.

The new monotheism involved a revolution in men's attitude towards the externals of religion as well as towards the object of worship. Not that the philosophers from the very first refused to conform to any of the traditional practices of polytheism ; Socrates taught that men should each conform to the religion of his city or state ; but, if the old forms were followed, it was with a totally different meaning.¹ Under the old system it was believed that each god revealed through his priests or prophets the mode in which he wished to be served, and thus the correct performance of the ritual was a matter of the highest moment. Moreover, as each nation had its own god or set of gods, the worship offered in the various temples was divided between a very large number of divine persons each of whom was distinct from the others. If, then, the monotheist joined in this worship at all, he must have done so with the consciousness that to him it was something very different from what it was to his contemporaries. Whatever temple he entered, he knew he was everywhere worshipping one and the same God ; and whatever ritual he followed, he was always doing what was prescribed by human and not by divine ordinance. Since the one God had not revealed Himself in connexion with any one of them, all outward systems of religion are equally

¹ Cf. Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 351.

authoritative or equally devoid of divine sanction, according as one chooses to look at them ; no one of them can claim any advantage over the other in this respect. And so, with the new God, there came in a universalism and a toleration in religious conformity which was almost modern in its breadth.

But the philosophical monotheist was forced to go even deeper than this. It was questionable whether ritual and sacrifice were in any sense essential to the Deity, and whether they were not merely empty pretences which only served to obscure the truth. Since He is either transcendent or immanent, either outside and above all that is or within it as the ground of its existence—if indeed He is not both at once—it follows that He cannot be thought of as dwelling in temples made with hands, or as drinking the blood of bulls and of goats. Sacrifice, ritual, temples, and all the religious proceedings and paraphernalia of the past, were not in any sense wrong, but were simply beside the mark. In so far as it was possible to speak of serving Him at all, it could only be by discovering what is man's place in His general scheme of things and by fulfilling it, by playing one's part in life as a man manfully. His will was not revealed directly, but mediated through nature, and only by fulfilling his proper function in nature—in other words by moral conduct—can man serve God. The outward corporate manifestations of religion ceased to have the same value and meaning ; for many minds morality was religion and became the whole duty of man and the whole service of God. The ancient system of sacrifices and ritual continued for many generations as the expression of the genuine religious feeling of the uneducated masses, and was acquiesced in by those who knew better as a sound policy for the state. Philosophy was not religion, and the new monotheism brought no set of externals with it ; but when it came in contact with Judaism, and still more when it came in contact with Christianity, the outward observances of these two religions were accepted as essential and authoritative by many philosophical minds, because it was believed that the one Almighty God had revealed Himself in connexion with and through these very externals.

CHAPTER II

YAHWEH, THE CHARACTERISTIC SEMITIC DEITY

THE history of the Hebrews emerges into the light of day with Moses. In the absence of records contemporary with Moses it is impossible to speak with certainty on the details of his life and work ; but it is hardly possible that the unanimous traditions of the nation could have been mistaken as to the existence of such a leader and the main outline of his place in history. The work of Moses stands for three things—the deliverance from Egypt, the formation of a covenant-bond between Yahweh and the several kindred tribes of the Hebrews, and thirdly, the consequent union of these tribes into one religious organization, or, in other words, into a single nation.

Yahweh was known as a god who had his seat on Mount Sinai (Judges, v 4, 5 ; cf. Exod. v 3 ; viii 27) and seems to have been worshipped by other tribes besides the Israelites ; at least, Jethro, who is described as the priest of Midian, invited Aaron and the elders of Israel to unite with him in a sacrificial meal in honour of Yahweh (Exod. xviii 1, 12) ; and some of the Kenites joined with the Israelites under the confederation of Yahweh (Judges i 16). In what relation the Israelites had stood to Yahweh before the Exodus it is difficult to say—possibly the name stood for the local deity of Sinai, whom many of the desert tribes worshipped when in the vicinity ; but it seems unlikely that the name was quite unknown to the Hebrews before the Exodus, for one may doubt whether they would have listened to a message from a God of whom they had never heard before. Moses brought to the afflicted Israelites in Egypt the message that Yahweh was both willing and able to help them ; and trusting in Him they succeeded under Moses' leadership in making their way to Sinai. Here

a solemn covenant, the memory of which never died out in Israel, was entered into between the refugees and the God by whose assistance they had escaped. The two contracting parties became related to each other as God and people.

This event was of the most profound significance. In the first place, by pledging themselves to the worship of a single Deity, the allied but divided tribes were consolidated into a single nation. In the common worship of Yahweh, Israel found its self-consciousness as a nation; for in those days the essence of nationhood consisted in being organized together for the worship of a common god or gods. From this time forth Yahweh remained the national God of Israel; for though individual Israelites often worshipped other gods as well as Yahweh, and though the cult of other deities was at times undertaken in Jerusalem by the leaders and official heads of the nation, yet the worship of Yahweh was never forsaken entirely, nor was any other god ever put in that relation to Israel in which Yahweh had stood since the days of Sinai. Yahweh remained the God of Israel, and Israel the people of Yahweh. This relationship of God and people implied that Israel was bound to offer worship to Yahweh, and to keep His law or Torah, i.e. instructions received from the religious leaders of the nation as to the way in which Yahweh willed to be served; and, on the other hand, Yahweh was bound to protect Israel against all enemies and to bless them with His favour.

Now this 'god-people' relation, as it may be called, with its mutual obligations, was by no means unique. It was the way in which, according to the common Semitic notion, divine and human beings were related to each other. Each nation had its own god, or set of gods; and to each god, or set of gods, there corresponded a people. The gods were as distinct from each other as were the nations, and a nation could not change its gods any more than it could change its own identity (cf. Jer. ii 10, 11). No gods were thought of as having an equal interest in all men alike, or as occupying the same relation towards all alike. Each god or set of gods was related to one special group of men and to them alone; in so far as he stood in

any relation to others, it was through their relations with his people; their enemies were his enemies, their allies were his friends.

‘In the East each people had its own particular god. The god and the people were correlative ideas; that which gave the individuals of a nation unity, and made them a people was the unity of its god; as, on the other hand, that which gave a god prestige was the strength and victorious career of his people. The self-consciousness of the nation and its religion reacted on one another, and rose and fell simultaneously.’¹

In so far, then, as concerns the ‘god-people’ relation between Israel and Yahweh, what took place at Sinai was this: there came into existence a new social and religious organization embracing a God and His people after the common Semitic pattern.

One point, however, requires further attention. Other Semitic peoples believed that the god-people relation, which subsisted between them and their gods, rested on some fact of physical generation; their god had begotten them as his children, or else it was based upon some primeval condition of things which was not defined. But the god-people relation between Israel and Yahweh rested upon a definite covenant—a covenant towards the formation of which Yahweh had taken the first steps. He had sought them in their affliction in Egypt, and had in mercy brought them to Sinai. And here, at this moment remembered by every one, a voluntary agreement was entered into. In this, then, the religion of Israel appears to be differentiated from other Semitic religions. Is it possible that in this fact we have the explanation of the other remarkable distinction of the Hebrews, that they believed their God to be the one and only God and of a righteous moral character? To discuss this point here would be to invert the proper order of things. One must first gather all the relevant facts together and make a complete review of the evidence.

¹ A. B. Davidson in *Expositor*, second series, viii 257 f.; cf. G. A. Smith, *Isaiah xl-lxvi*, p. 239 n.; cf. also W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 29-39, and Barton, *Study of Semitic Origins*, p. 81.

But it may be observed here that the idea of the covenant did not destroy the sense of the reality of the god-people relation either in the minds of the people or in those of the prophets. So far from weakening the sense of the bond between Yahweh and Israel, the remembrance of the loving-kindness displayed at the Exodus and in the covenant seems to have made Yahweh appear more closely united to Israel than ever. At least, when the prophets recall the covenant it is not to say, 'I chose you at Sinai and therefore I can now cast you away completely and forever'; but rather, 'in love and pity I delivered you from the Egyptian bondage and chose you for my own; how base, then, is your ingratitude in not observing the covenant and the law of your God!' or again, 'I remember the covenant at Sinai, and therefore, though I punish you, yet for my own name's sake I will not make a full end, but will, when you are thoroughly purged, restore you and bless you in the sight of all men.' This peculiarity of the covenant may have made it appear easier for Yahweh to punish Israel for what the prophets regarded as disobedience, yet so far was it from suggesting that Yahweh could cast away Israel for another race, that it was to them the very reason why Yahweh had not utterly destroyed Israel and the very ground of their eternal confidence that what Yahweh had begun in Israel He surely would accomplish.¹

Moses, then, laid the foundation of the nation and of the religion of Israel. Undoubtedly he imposed upon the new confederation that they should worship Yahweh and Yahweh alone. But did he go further than this and deny the existence of any other god? The command that a man should have but one wife does not imply that there are no other women to be married; no more does the command to Israel to worship no other god but Yahweh imply that there are no other divine beings to be worshipped. Did Moses, then, proclaim that there is but one God and that He is righteous, as the prophets in later days taught? Now in answer to this question it is safe to say that if there had been no prophets in Israel, and no one imbued with their principles, if the

¹ Cf. below, Chapter VII.

history of Israel had been cut off short at the beginning of the monarchy, and all the literature of a later date than the Judges had never been written, one could not answer these questions in the affirmative. In the light of what happened from the ninth and eighth century onwards, we may be justified in assigning such principles to Moses ; but it is an inference from later records and events. The consideration of this question, then, must also be left over until one has obtained a wider view of the facts.

II

From across the Jordan the Israelites looked over at the Canaanites in possession of the Promised Land. These Canaanites had once been nomads like themselves, but were now settled down as farmers on the rich plains of Palestine enjoying the fruits of a more advanced stage of civilization. They had chariots of iron for use in battle and their towns were protected by walls. These proved formidable obstacles to the children of Israel, who had to be content at first with a precarious footing upon the less productive lands on the hill-tops.¹ The Canaanites were not exterminated at one blow as the later narratives of Joshua represent. The struggle lasted no doubt for generations, until finally the two peoples settled down side by side and gradually, by intercourse and intermarriage, became assimilated into one.

This Canaanitish element was responsible for much in Israel's history. The Canaanites had no one national deity, but worshipped local agricultural gods called Baalim, who were supposed to make the soil fertile and the harvest plentiful. These Baalim were celebrated in the three great agricultural festivals at the beginning and end of the wheat harvest, and at the autumn ingathering of grapes. Their service was marked by specially gross indulgence in feasting and drinking ; and since the worship of the Baals was accompanied by that of the Ashtaroth, or female goddesses of fecundity, sexual licence was unrestrained. These things were done, not in the face of divine commands, but as an

See Judges i 17-36 and Joshua xv 63 ; xvi 10 ; xvii 12-18 ; xix 47.

integral part of the service due to the gods from men. We hear of *kedeshim* and *kedeshoth*, men and women consecrated to prostitution in honour of the gods.

Such was the people with whom the Israelites came in contact on crossing the Jordan. The religion of nomads in the desert is always of a comparatively severe and simple type, but now, on settling in Palestine, the invading tribes had to take up agriculture. This advance to a new stage of civilization in which the vine is cultivated, brought with it new opportunities for indulgence such as had not been present before. Unfortunately the Israelites do not seem to have had sufficient moral stamina to resist, and fell ready victims to the vices of the Canaanites. In fact, all the excesses and abuses of the Canaanite religion were copied and cherished for generations by Israel. Here is the source of most of that immorality and self-indulgence against which the prophets for centuries afterwards protested so vehemently.

One will be the less surprised at this when one recollects that, in taking up agriculture, the Hebrews would naturally turn to the example of the farming population already settled on the soil. These people would tell them that the first condition of success was to seek the blessing of the Baalim upon their labours, and that to the Baalim were due firstfruits and thankofferings. Hence Israel was not merely brought into contact with their debasing worship, but was also introduced to the service of these gods under conditions which made it difficult for them to stand aloof. Indeed, since Yahweh was believed to have His seat at Sinai, the wonder is that the Israelites did not go over to the Baalim body and soul and become Canaanites pure and simple. That many of them did take up the worship of the Baalim is the constant complaint of the Deuteronomists;¹ and for generations Yahweh was served with all the gross rites of the Canaanite religion—a service which the prophets refused to recognize as a service of Yahweh, although it was probably so intended by the offerers.

But other influences were at work to check the tendency

¹ Cf. Judges ii 11, 13, 19; iii 7; viii 33; x 6; 1 Sam. viii 8, &c.

to abandon Yahweh for the Baals. Israel came to be the predominant partner, and on them fell the burden of resisting foreign aggression. So long as the tribes remained united they were a match for their foes ; but when they lost their sense of being members one of another, they became a prey to one invader after another. Now this sense of national unity was created and fostered by the worship of Yahweh, the one God of all the tribes ; for when they went out to fight against a common foe it was always under His banner. Hence every war and every battle was an occasion for the furthering of the religion of Yahweh. United under Him they conquered, but when they forsook Him and followed the local Baalim their sense of patriotism declined, men refused to come to the help of Yahweh, and their weakened condition gave the victory to their enemies.¹ And so it was in Yahweh's name that Israel repelled aggression and retained her hold upon the land.

The result of the settlement in Palestine, then, was this. The tribes of Israel became a nation of farmers instead of a band of shepherds. Yahweh, who at first had His seat at Sinai, now became settled in Palestine, the Baal or owner of the soil, the source of its fertility, the giver of its corn and wine and oil. And the old austere religious rites of the desert were changed for the joyous festivals of an agricultural people. The old shrines of the Baalim and the old rites of the Canaanites were continued much as they had been before, but it was Yahweh to whom the worship was offered, rather than to the Baalim.

The life and death struggles with the Philistines supplied the occasion for the complete and final ascendancy of Yahweh over the Baalim. To many enlightened spirits such as Samuel, it appeared advisable to appoint a king over Israel, who, acting as the permanent head of the national forces, could summon all under one banner, and thus make united action against an enemy at all times possible. And the monarchy at once became a guarantee for the permanence of the Yahweh religion ; for it was to the interest of the kings, as leaders of the whole nation, to

¹ Cf. A. B. Davidson, *O. T. Prophecy*, pp. 32-9.

represent themselves as appointed by Yahweh the God of the whole nation ; and hence they were at all times supporters of Yahweh the national God.

The monarchy established with Saul as first king (c. 1030 B.C.) passed on from Saul to David and from David to Solomon. Saul was but the head of the military forces of the nation, and had to find his own opportunity for raising himself to power.¹ David possessed a trained force of soldiers at his command, and hence his government was more effective than Saul's in times of peace as well as in war. Solomon and Rehoboam seem to have endeavoured to turn the military leadership into an Eastern despotism, and this the nation would not tolerate. The Northern tribes had always been separated from Judah by a series of unconquered Canaanite towns, and under Rehoboam Solomon's kingdom broke in two along this line. A separate kingdom with another line of kings was established by Jeroboam in 937 B.C.

III

The division of the kingdom forms a convenient point at which to review the religious and moral condition of the people. If we look for a high ethical standard and for lofty views of Yahweh's being, we are much disappointed. It was an age of fierce and barbarous cruelty.² The standard of right and wrong is set by the interests of the community. Anything which conflicts with the interests of the tribe is condemned, such as a failure to send a contingent to the war (Judges v 23 ; xxi 8-12) ; or the murders committed by Abimelech (ix 56, 57) ; or an offence against the laws of hospitality (xix 22-24 ; xx 12). And again, dark and treacherous deeds are commended if they are perpetrated for the advantage of Israel against her enemies (Judges iii 18-23 ; v 24-27).³ Bloodshed is no disgrace but a glory, provided the victims be not Israelites (Judges xiv 19 ; 1 Sam. xviii 25-27) ; people did not act on moral principles

¹ Cf. Kent, *History of the Hebrew People*, i 118-22.

² Cf. Judges i 6, 7 ; viii 7, 16-21 ; ix 5 ; xix 24-6 ; xxi 10, 11, 20-3.

³ Cf. McNeile in *Interpreter*, iii 2, January 1907, pp. 147-53).

as such ; the standard was set by what was customary (Judges xix 30 ; 2 Sam. xiii 12).¹

And one fails to find any very advanced views of Yahweh's power and character. Yahweh is the God of Israel and now dwells in Palestine, 'the inheritance of Yahweh' (Exod. xv 17 ; 1 Sam. xxvi 19). The existence of other gods, so far from being denied, is apparently accepted as an unquestioned fact. Jephthah appears to accept the existence of Chemosh when he says to the Ammonites, 'Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess ? So whomsoever Yahweh our God hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess' (Judges xi 24). Again, there is the oft-quoted complaint of David that, in driving him from his native land, his enemies are compelling him to leave the inheritance of Yahweh and to go to serve other gods (1 Sam. xxvi 19). Naomi entreated Ruth the Moabitess to follow the example of her sister-in-law and go back 'unto her people and unto her god' ; but Ruth replies, 'thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God' (Ruth i 15, 16). Solomon was scarcely a stricter monotheist than David, for he permitted his wives to set up the cult of their native deities on Judæan soil (1 Kings xi 1-8).

Yahweh again is the war-god of Israel, leader of the hosts of Israel in war.² 'Yahweh is a man of war' (Exod. xv 3 ; cf. Num. xxi 14), who goes out to fight against the enemies of His people (Judges v 4 ; 1 Sam. iv 3-8 ; 2 Sam. v 24). David fights the battles of Yahweh and his enemies are the enemies of Yahweh (1 Sam. xxv 28 ; xxx 26). Warriors must be consecrated to Yahweh (Deut. xxiii 9-14 ; cf. 1 Sam. xxi 4 f.). It is the 'Spirit of Yahweh' which is said to nerve Samson to perform his exploits against the Philistines (Judges xiv 19). Gideon conquered with the battle-cry—'The sword of Yahweh and of Gideon' (Judges vii 20). In days of triumphant success, when the arms of Israel were victorious, we find a correspondingly exalted idea of the divine power and majesty of Yahweh. The song of Moses asks, 'who is like unto thee, O Yahweh, among the gods ? Who is like thee,

¹ Cf. Gen. xx 9 ; xxix 26 ; xxxiv 7 ; Kautzsch in *H. D. B.* v. 624a, 633, 663a.

² See Kautzsch, *op. cit.* 636 b.

glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ? ' (Exod. xv 11).¹ But there is no proof that Yahweh was believed to be the one and only God, earlier than the J E strands of the Pentateuch, which probably date from the ninth century B. C.

Nor do we find Him represented as influenced by motives of any very different order from those which were supposed to prompt the actions of other Semitic deities. Uzzah was struck dead because he laid his hand upon the ark of Yahweh (2 Sam. vi 6-8; cf. 1 Sam. vi 19). The three years of famine in the reign of David were held to be due to Yahweh's anger that Saul had violated the oath made with the Gibeonites. The offence is expiated by hanging ' up unto Yahweh in Gibeah of Saul ' seven of Saul's sons (2 Sam. xxi 1-6; cf. Num. xxv 4). A similar instance is to be found in the case of the pestilence and the census in 2 Sam. xxiv. Yahweh was believed to care more for the exact fulfilment of a vow than for the moral character of the vow itself. Jephthah must fulfil his vow though it means the death of his own daughter (Judges xi 35). Saul was ready to slay Jonathan for breaking the curse (1 Sam. xiv 17-45). Samuel insists upon the rigorous enforcement of the ' ban ', and ' hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh in Gilgal ' (1 Sam. xv 33).

Again, the use of images in the worship of Yahweh appears to have been not only countenanced, but regarded as a normal part of the religion. No condemnation is expressed of Micah's graven image or ' pesel ' (Judges xvii 3; xviii 30, 31). Gideon made an ' ephod ' or image of Yahweh—not to be confused with the linen garment worn by priests, see 1 Sam. ii 18; 2 Sam. vi 14; Exod. xxv 7; xxviii 4—and all Israel went a whoring after it (Judges viii 27). David constantly used a portable figure representing Yahweh called an ' ephod ' when inquiring of Yahweh (1 Sam. xxiii 6, 9; xxx 7).² The use of teraphim, which

¹ Cf. the song of Deborah in Judges v 4, 5; see Ottley, *Religion of Israel*, p. 75.

² Cf. Judges xvii 5; 1 Sam. xxi 10, &c., and also 1 Sam. ii 28; xiv 3, where נשׂא should be translated ' carried ' or ' bore ', not ' wore ' as in R V, and also 1 Sam. xiv 18 R V marg. following LXX.

were often, though not always, images of Yahweh, does not appear to have aroused any objection at this period.¹ We note one sign of progress at the period when the monarchy was divided. During the age of the Judges, the very existence of the Yahweh worship was at stake; now its predominance is assured. The nation is clearly and definitely under the protection of Yahweh.

There is, however, no proof that before this time there had been more than one level in the religious life and beliefs of the worshippers of Yahweh; and that level is the level of other Semitic races in the same stage of civilization. Soon after this one observes a higher as well as a lower level; the mass of the people continue on the common Semitic level and worship Yahweh as a characteristic Semitic deity, while the prophets and their school of thought uphold quite different views of Yahweh's power and character. The former must be the object of attention for the present; the latter will be considered in later chapters.

IV

The Northern Kingdom was by far the more powerful and more populous of the two. It is the centre of interest in the Books of the Kings for the two hundred years or so of its existence down to the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C.; and it was the scene of the activity of the earliest of the great Yahweh prophets, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea. The division of the kingdom did not alter the loyalty of either section to Yahweh; both the royal houses ruled in the name of Yahweh; the separation was looked on as unnatural, and each side claimed to be the original parent stock (cf. Deut. xxxiii 7).

This of course does not imply that Yahweh was popularly believed to be the only God in existence. Quite on the contrary, there was a continual temptation, which at times proved irresistible, to make the national position more

¹ Judges xvii 5; xviii 14, 17, 20; 1 Sam. xix 13, 16; cf. Gen. xxxi 19, 30, 32; see Kautzsch, op. cit. 641, 642.

secure by courting the favour of other gods in addition to that of Yahweh, either because they were the gods of an allied, or because they were the gods of a conquering race. Thus Ahab had no idea of abandoning the worship of Yahweh for that of the Tyrian Baal, as is shown by the fact that he consulted four hundred prophets of Yahweh and by the names he gave his sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram¹ (1 Kings xxii 5-7, 51, and 2 Kings iii 1). But he wished to secure his political position by an alliance with the King of Tyre, and in introducing the cult of his ally's god into his capital, he was but notifying the world of this alliance after the usual Semitic practice. To refuse admission to every foreign god involved the political isolation of Israel. Ahab, convinced that this alliance was for the best interests of his country, resented the interference of Elijah, regarded him as a fanatic, and sought to deal with him accordingly.

One cannot be certain that Elijah taught the sole Deity of Yahweh ; his efforts were directed against the recognition of the Tyrian Baal in Israel. This opposition to Ahab may have been due to the despotic methods of government which Ahab learned from his Tyrian wife Jezebel and practised upon Naboth ; or it may have been due to abhorrence of the corruptions and excesses associated with the worship of the Tyrian god ; it would seem more probable, however, that Elijah was deeply impressed with a sense that Yahweh is a God of tremendous majesty, and that at all costs Israel must be saved from participation in the service of any other god. Prophets there were in every race, but none such as Elijah and his successors, who at great personal cost stood out against the policy of the kings for a higher and purer form of worship. Hence we may perhaps see in Elijah and Elisha the beginnings of a view of Yahweh which afterwards stands out more clearly and explicitly in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah.

As to the belief of the masses, the complaint of Elijah in 1 Kings xix 14 was no doubt much exaggerated ; still,

¹ Both these names are compounds which contain the names of the national God of Israel.

there is more than enough to show that the children of Israel were not in his day strict monotheists. Ahab's son Ahaziah apparently held the same views as his father. When he fell ill, he sent to Baalzebub the god of Ekron to inquire whether he would recover from his sickness (2 Kings i 2). Again, the history of the joint expedition of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat against the Moabites shows that the two kings stood in some dread of their enemies' god Chemosh. When King Mesha saw that nothing else would avail to stem the tide of Hebrew success, he offered up his eldest son as a burnt offering upon the city wall to Chemosh. This heroic action spread dismay among the people of Yahweh. 'And there was great wrath against Israel; and they departed from him, and returned to their own land' (2 Kings iii 27).

Moreover, there is abundant evidence to show that while the people of the Northern Kingdom never abandoned the worship of Yahweh, yet they looked on Him and sought to serve Him as though He were in moral character merely a 'characteristic Semitic deity'.¹ Their attitude implies that so long as the ritual is carefully performed, so long as sacrifices are rich and abundant, so long as tithes and first-fruits are duly paid and religious assemblies thronged, Yahweh's favour is assured. The moral condition of the people was a matter of quite secondary importance; but not always of no importance at all, for Yahweh was the law-giver of Israel and the patron of justice in the land. A deed such as Ahab's murder of Naboth revolted the moral sense of the nation and reaped Yahweh's punishment (2 Kings ix 25, 26).

But when we come to the days of Jeroboam II (780-740 B.C.), a hundred years later than Ahab, things have undergone a change for the worse. Owing to certain changes in the economic condition of the country² the people had become sharply divided into two classes—the extreme rich and the extreme poor—and deeds as black as Ahab's were familiar occurrences. The picture reflected from the pages

¹ Ottley, *Religion of Israel*, p. 69; G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, i 40.

² See below, pp. 116-118.

of Amos and Hosea shows us a people festering with social sores; cruelty and inhuman oppression, extortion and injustice, were practised upon every one who was not strong enough to maintain his rights for himself; the feasts of Yahweh were the scenes of excess and indulgence of every kind; His priests and prophets were amongst the worst offenders. And yet, in spite of this wholesale immorality, the nation was devoted to Yahweh and all the externals of religion, ritual, offerings, and festivals were kept up with great magnificence; and the people did not hesitate to express the utmost confidence that Yahweh was with them; in fact they enjoyed life in confident expectation of the coming of His day of victory.¹ It is quite evident that the nation as a whole, including kings, priests, people, and some prophets, did not believe that moral righteousness was necessary to Yahweh's favour; they put their trust in devotion to the externals of religion to placate Him for any moral offence. In this they are plainly on the same level as their polytheistic neighbours; for the idea that morality is unnecessary, if the routine of worship be observed, was a conception 'fundamental in early Semitic religions'.²

Hosea charges the people with worshipping the Baalim (Hos. ii 5-8, 13, 17; xi 2). It is highly probable, however, that this worship was intended for Yahweh: for after the conquest Yahweh became the Baal of the whole land, and His worship was carried on at the same sanctuaries and with the same rites as those which had disgraced the service of the Canaanite Baals. This the prophet denounces as adultery and unfaithfulness to the covenant (Hos. i 2; ii 4, 5); and his charge was not without a solid foundation; for the immoralities which accompanied this worship were no part of the original Yahweh religion to which Hosea wishes to recall the nation (cf. ii 14-16; xii 9; xiii 4), but an importation from the Canaanites.³

¹ Cf. Hos. ii 11-13; iv 1-13; vi 6-10; vii 1-7, 14; viii 11-13; ix 8, 9; x 1, 2; xii 7, 8, 11; Amos ii 6-8; iii 10; iv 1-5; v 7, 10-12, 18-23; vi 1-6; viii 4-6.

² Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, p. cxiii; G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, i 103.

³ Cf. A. B. Davidson, *O. T. Prophecy*, 63-5.

In fact, in externals, there was little at this time to distinguish the worship offered to Yahweh by Israel from that offered to other national gods by other Semitic peoples. Yahweh was represented under the form of a calf at Bethel and Gilgal;¹ and the sanctuaries were equipped with the same kind of furniture, such as sacred trees, or stumps, or poles, which served as substitutes for trees, called *asherim*;² sacred stones or pillars called *mazzeboth* and translated 'obelisks' in R V margin.³ These *asherim* and *mazzeboth* were regular parts of the Baal worship,⁴ yet the Jehovistic and Elohist writers ascribe the use of *mazzeboth* (though never the use of *asherim*) to the patriarchs.⁵ Finally, there were *kedeshoth*;⁶ but no *kedeshim* are mentioned in the Northern Kingdom.

V

These same features reappear in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. *Kedeshim* and *kedeshoth* seem to have been consecrated in Yahweh's honour;⁷ *asherim* and *mazzeboth* were in use.⁸ In the south, however, there always was an official worship of Yahweh which was without images. This was conducted at first by Eli and Samuel at Shiloh, where was the ancient ark, and later in the Temple at Jerusalem; and yet there were images of the goddess Ashera in the Temple, one of which was removed by Asa and the other by Josiah;⁹ and a brazen serpent called Nehushtan remained until the days of Hezekiah.¹⁰ The popular religion was not free from the use of idols, as we learn from the prophetic protests.¹¹ And these idols probably represented

¹ Hos. iv 15, 17; viii 4-6; x 5; xiii 2; Amos iv 5; v 5.

² 1 Kings xiv 15; 2 Kings xiii 6; xvii 10, 16.

³ Hos. iii 4; x 1; 2 Kings xvii 10.

⁴ Judges vi 25; 1 Kings xvi 32, 33; 2 Kings xxiii 14; and 2 Kings iii 2; x 27; Exod. xxiii 24; xxxiv 13; Deut. vii 5; xii 3.

⁵ Gen. xxxi 45, 51; Exod. xxiv 4; cf. Hos. iii 4.

⁶ Hos. iv 14; cf. Amos ii 7.

⁷ 1 Kings xiv 24; xv 12; xxii 46; 2 Kings xxiii 7; Deut. xxiii 17, 18.

⁸ 1 Kings xiv 23; 2 Kings xviii 4; Isa. xvii 8; cf. i 29; Mic. v 13, 14.

⁹ 1 Kings xv 13; 2 Kings xxi 3, 7; xxiii 4, 6. ¹⁰ 2 Kings xviii 4.

¹¹ Isa. ii 8, 18, 20; Mic. i 7; v 13.

Yahweh, being connected with the old 'high places' or local shrines where the Baal worship had been carried on amid riotous drunkenness and excess.¹ Magic also and divination were common among the people.²

There is again ample evidence from the Kingdom of Judah of the same estimation of Yahweh as in the Northern Kingdom. As a typical Semitic deity, as a god who delights in ritual and sacrifice and can overlook immorality, He received a whole-hearted devotion from His people. 'Where-with shall I come before Yahweh, and bow myself down before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' (Mic. vi 6, 7). Both Isaiah and Micah bear witness to the same rapacious extortion practised on the poor and the same cruel injustice to the unprotected, as well as to the same blind confidence in costly offerings and crowded festivals. 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith Yahweh. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting . . . your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.'³

Things had not improved when Jeremiah prophesied about a hundred years later. The same social evils reappear, the same cruel wronging of the poor and unprotected,⁴

¹ Isa. xxviii 7, 8; cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 251.

² Isa. ii 6; iii 3; viii 19; xxix 4; Mic. iii 7; v 7; 2 Kings xxiii 24; Deut. xviii 10-14.

³ Isa. i 11, 13, 15-17; cf. i 23; iii 12-16; v 8-12, 18-23; x 1, 2; xxviii 7, 8; Mic. ii 1, 2, 8, 9; iii 1-5; 9-11; vi 10-12; vii 2-6.

⁴ Jer. v 28; xxi 12; xxii 3, 13, 16-17; xxxiv 8-11.

together with other sins.¹ And yet there is the same devotion to the national God and the same fond confidence that His favour is towards them. There are not wanting those who in the name of Yahweh are crying, Peace, peace,² when the prophet knows well there is no peace.

‘Trust ye not,’ says Jeremiah, ‘in lying words, saying, The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh are these. . . . Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered that ye may do all these abominations?’ (Jer. vii 4, 9, 10).

Jeremiah continually charges the people with worshipping other gods as well as Yahweh. Two kinds of false worship are mentioned. One of these was a long-standing abuse which they had learned from their fathers, the service of the old Canaanite Baalim,³ a worship which involved the use of idols,⁴ and was carried on at the ‘high places’, ‘on every high hill and under every green tree’ (Jer. ii 20; iii 6, 13). Probably the people intended it for Yahweh; at least, they repudiate the charge of worshipping the Baalim and claim to be innocent in Yahweh’s sight (ii 23, 35); but Jeremiah, like Hosea, Isaiah, and the Deuteronomists before him, refused to recognize this local worship with its old Canaanite abuses as in any sense a worship of Yahweh.

The other false worship was a new cult, a class of strange gods whom their fathers had not known, the Chaldaean deities of heaven. This new form of unfaithfulness to Yahweh was induced by conditions in the political world which had not existed in the days of Isaiah. All the Palestinian states suffered from the same affliction, the conquests of Assyria, and a terrible superstitious gloom settled down

¹ Jer. v 1-5, 7, 8; viii 10; ix 2-8.

² Jer. viii 11; xiv 12, 13; cf. v 12.

³ Jer. ix 14; cf. ii 23; vii 9; xi 13, 17; xix 5; cf. xiii 10; xvi 11; xviii 15.

⁴ Jer. i 16; ii 26, 27; iii 9; viii 19.

upon them. Hitherto they had fought and struggled among themselves to preserve the balance of power within the narrow limits of Palestine, each nation rejoicing in glad confidence that its god would ultimately give it the final victory. But the rise of a power like Assyria, mightier by far than all the world of united Palestine, chilled them with a strange fear. New and unknown gods were evidently in the ascendant before whom their well-known national deities were helpless. Hence we find under Manasseh a feverish anxiety to serve the powers that be with the costliest sacrifices imaginable.¹ The Assyro-Chaldaean deities, the gods who have proved mightier than Yahweh, the Queen and the host of heaven, were taken over and assiduously worshipped.² The precedent of Ahaz, who made his son 'to pass through the fire' (2 Kings xvi 3), was followed on an extensive scale.³ The condition of the Yahweh worship is well illustrated in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, where within the same few verses we hear of cakes made in honour of the Queen of heaven, and of drink-offerings to other gods (v 18), of burnt-offerings and sacrifices to Yahweh (v 21), and of the burning of sons and daughters in the fire (v 31).⁴ This astral cult was carried on into the exile. Ezekiel saw the women weeping for Tammuz in Yahweh's house and the men worshipping the sun toward the East (Ezek. viii 14, 16). In Egypt, the last remnant of the people express their deliberate intention of pursuing the same practices as their fathers had followed in Judah (Jer. xlv 15-19).

VI

It is evident that the theology of the nation as a whole was, in its main principles, precisely the same as that of the surrounding Semitic peoples. They had no more idea of abandoning their national God Yahweh, than they had of disbanding themselves as a nation; but they thought to

¹ Cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 366 f.

² Zeph. i 5; Jer. v 19; vii 17, 18; viii 2; xix 13; xlv 17; 2 Kings xxiii 11, 12.

³ Jer. xxxii 35; Ezek. xvi 21; xx 26, 31.

⁴ Cf. Budde, *Religion of Israel up to the Exile*, p. 184.

serve Him in the same way as other nations served their gods ; Yahweh was to Israel what Chemosh was to Moab, and therefore the same means and the same conduct which won the favour of Chemosh for Moab ought to win the favour of Yahweh for Israel. Yahweh surely could not be angry when His people were serving Him according to the most approved methods. And it was not the lower and more ignorant classes alone who took this view. It was supported by kings, priests, and a large number of prophets, the religious leaders to whom it was natural to look for guidance. In the Northern Kingdom, Amos was persecuted by Amaziah the priest of Bethel (Amos vii 10-17). Hosea complains of both priests and prophets (Hos. iv 4-6 ; v 1 ; vi 9). Micah has some bitter words for the ' heads of the house of Jacob '. ' They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money ; yet will they lean upon Yahweh, and say, Is not Yahweh in the midst of us ? no evil shall come upon us.' ¹ Jeremiah had continually to bear up against the persecution of kings, priests, and prophets, all of whom, holding the popular theology of the day, regarded him as a renegade and a traitor to his country. How complete the national apostasy was is shown by the words of Jeremiah : ' As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed ; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests and their prophets ; which say to a stock, Thou art my father ; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth.' ² Jehoiakim sent to Egypt and slew Uriah for preaching a message akin to Jeremiah's, and he burnt the roll of Jeremiah's prophecies and sought to lay hands on its author. ³ Jeremiah's familiar friends were on the watch to trip him up. ⁴ He was put in the stocks by Pashhur the priest (Jer. xx 1, 2). Twice his life was attempted ; once by his own townsmen of Anathoth

¹ Mic. iii 10, 11 ; cf. 5-7 ; ii 6, 11 ; Isa. ix 15 ; xxviii 7, 8 ; Zeph. iii 3, 4.

² Jer. ii 26, 27 ; cf. iv 9 ; v 1-5 ; viii 1 ; xiii 13 ; xxxii 32.

³ Jer. xxvi 20-3 ; xxxvi 23-6.

⁴ Jer. xx 7-11 ; cf. xv 10 ; xvii 15-18 ; xviii 18.

(xi 18-23) and once by the 'priests and prophets' from whom he barely escaped with the help of the princes.¹ Both priest and prophet deal falsely (v 30; vi 13; viii 8-11); and yet they are quite confident that Yahweh is speaking and will speak to Israel through them. 'Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet' (Jer. xviii 18). Plainly, it was no easy matter for the average man to decide in favour of Jeremiah against his prophetic opponents; both claimed to speak in the name of Yahweh, and both asserted with equal emphasis and confidence the genuineness of their own message and the spuriousness of that of the other party. Jeremiah was in life-long conflict with these so-called 'false' prophets; for taking the popular view of Yahweh as a characteristic Semitic deity, they preached peace when there was no peace, and foretold the early restoration of the captive people to Yahweh's favour and to their own homes—a preaching which the popular party were very willing to accept.²

It is plain that up to the Babylonian captivity the main stream of the national religious life flowed along upon the polytheistic level. The vast majority of the nation drew no distinction between Yahweh and other Semitic deities, save that He was their national god; and down to the days of the Exile in Babylon they worshipped Him with the rites, the excesses, and the furniture, of the old Baal worship of the Canaanites. The prophetic party with their higher views were never more than a small minority, and at times were reduced to a handful. Whatever impression Isaiah may have made in the reign of Hezekiah, it was, despite his triumphant vindication in the retreat of Sennacherib in 701 B. C., entirely swept away in the reaction which set in under Manasseh when the astral deities of the Chaldeans were sedulously worshipped in addition to the

¹ Jer. xxvi 10-24; cf. xxxvii 11-16; xxxviii 1-13, 14-28.

² Cf. Jer. ii 8; v 31; xiv 13-18; xx 6; xxiii 9-40; xxvi 8, 11; xxvii 13-18; xxviii; xxix; xxxvii 19; Lam. ii 9, 14; iv 13; Ezek. xiii; xiv 9-11; xxii 25-30.

national God. The prophetic party, realizing that the old Canaanite 'high places' were the source of much contamination, seem to have determined that the only way to purify the religious life of the people was to extirpate that local worship root and branch. This culminated in a great reform under Josiah in 621 B.C., when the book containing the Deuteronomic teaching was discovered in the Temple by Hilkiah the priest. With this reformation the influence of the prophets reached its highest point in the pre-exilic period, and for the moment made an impression upon the course of events (2 Kings xxii-xxiii 30). But when Josiah met defeat and death at Megiddo in 609 B.C., another violent reaction set in, and under Jehoiakim all the old abuses returned with renewed vigour. The higher views of the prophets were so thoroughly discredited that they received no further credence till after the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

This rapid and incomplete survey of facts well known to Old Testament scholars will suffice for the purpose in hand. It shows that up to the time of the Babylonian exile, the genius of the people and the general trend of the development of the national religion were not setting in the direction of monotheism. The 'true' prophets are not borne along with the tide of popular feeling, nor are they on the crest of a wave of national tendency towards monotheism; they are not heading a movement which received its support from the masses; quite on the contrary, they have to uphold their views in spite of a violent opposition and in the face of an unbelief which, except at rare intervals, was almost universal. There is no use looking to the national character or the national genius to account for the Hebrew monotheism. The national religious life and the national character are only too plainly set in the same direction as that taken by other Semitic nations; just as the national institutions do not differ in kind from their contemporary analogues elsewhere.¹ The whole plane of culture, the whole state of thought, is plainly that of the polytheistic age. Though the religion of Israel was in origin henotheistic,

¹ W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, pp. 49-52.

i.e. devoted to the service of one God only without a denial of the existence of others, yet henotheism implies essentially the same view of the world as that which underlay the ancient polytheism. So long as henotheism remains henotheism, the other gods are still there ; and at moments of acute crisis, as is so well illustrated in the history of Israel, there is always a tendency to invoke their aid. The origin of the Hebrew monotheism, then, must be sought in the prophets and in the phenomena of their mental and religious life, not in those of the people. And in the endeavour to seek this origin, it must be remembered that the Hebrew monotheists were brought up in and surrounded by the polytheistic stage of culture and the polytheistic modes of thought. The problem is to discover how the canonical prophets, under such conditions as these, could have reached a monotheistic belief.

CHAPTER III

YAHWEH, THE ONE AND ONLY GOD

BEFORE attempting to discuss the source of the prophetic belief in one supreme God, one must endeavour to gain an accurate idea of the nature of that belief, and especially of its relation to the polytheistic conception of deity on the one hand, and to philosophical monotheism on the other. In the one essential point that there is but one God, the Hebrew prophets are at one with Plato and Aristotle; but in other respects the monotheism of the Hebrews is embedded in conceptions which are the common property of polytheism and appear incompatible with a purely philosophical monotheism.

In the first place, it was pointed out above¹ that the forces which caused the dissolution of polytheism were also responsible for the fact that the very existence of a Being who might be called 'God' became no longer self-evident. Belief in such a Being had now to be reached by argument and proof; and since there are two ways of thinking about most things, it was quite possible to doubt the very existence of such a Person; and it was still more questionable whether, if there is such a God, He is really accessible to human entreaty. Now the prophets have not reached this stage. The existence of a God they call 'Yahweh' is assumed by them as a self-evident fact. They are no more conscious of a possibility of questioning His existence or of a need of offering a proof of it, than the polytheists thought of demonstrating the existence of any of their gods. To have been asked for a reason for their belief in Yahweh's existence would have caused them no little surprise; to them it was too much a self-evident fact to be capable of demonstration. Their confidence no doubt rested on the same founda-

¹ Cf. pp. 36 f.

tions as that of the polytheists. And the average polytheist would have required no further proof of Yahweh's existence than the existence of Israel. Gods and nations were cor-relatives ; and in those days it was practically impossible to think of a national existence without a national god ; for it was just the devotion to a common god which begat in the individuals the consciousness of belonging to a single whole, and which gave a sanction and an obligatory character to the national organization. Nor again, do the prophets appear to be conscious of any demand for a proof that Yahweh is accessible to man, and that He may be influenced in His actions by the prayers and doings of men. It is evident that the age when 'doubt' is possible has not yet arrived. In these respects, then, the Hebrew monotheists appear to live within the same intellectual atmosphere as the polytheists.

Again, it was pointed out above that the new God of philosophical monotheism could not be identified with any of the gods who had been worshipped by the polytheists. But in the case of the Hebrew prophets, the one and only God is the same Person as He who is worshipped and known as the national God of the Hebrews. The contention of the prophets is not simply that there is only one God as against those who maintained that there was more than one ; this point was no doubt involved, but it was not prominent in the consciousness of either side ; the issue as expressly formulated by the prophets is that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is the one and only God, Creator and Sovereign of the Universe ; while it was implied in the attitude of their adversaries that this same Deity, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is limited in power and sphere of action by the existence and powers of other deities. The issue at stake concerns the limits of the power and the moral character of a certain Deity known to both sides by the name of Yahweh. The Person is common to both sides. The prophets do not say that the Israelites should worship a different Person from Him whom they honour as their national God ; their contention is that He should be worshipped and served as an Almighty and All-holy Per-

sonality beside whom there is none else, and not as a characteristic Semitic deity. To understand 'mono-Yahwism', as perhaps we ought to call it, it is essential to grasp the fact that, in the dispute between the mono-Yahwists and the polytheists, each side knows that it has in mind one and the same Person as the other ; and that the very same God who was proclaimed by the prophets to be the only God was at the same time being worshipped by the great mass of Israel as one among many others.

There seems to be a tendency in some quarters to think that the God of the universe was substituted for the God of Israel between the period of the Judges and that of the great prophets ; that the prophets were in some way led to see through the Personality of Yahweh, the local and tribal deity, to a greater and more inclusive whole behind Him, and to see, in this greater spiritual Being, a Person in some sense other than the God of the period of the Judges. But this is surely a mistake. It is no doubt true that the prophetic view of Yahweh's character and power differs widely from that which was current in the period of the Judges and even later than the Judges, but the prophets themselves never imagined that Yahweh Himself had changed or that He had ever been other than they proclaimed Him to be. They did not preach a God who was personally distinct from the Yahweh worshipped by the average Israelite ; but they maintained that the average Israelite did not know Yahweh as He is, had never realized His true character, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider' (Isa. i 3). It should be remembered that in the ancient Semitic world, we are in an atmosphere in which it was popularly held that to each divine name there corresponded a separate personality, and that the personalities of the gods were as distinct from each other as are those of men. And just as the most obvious fact about a human personality is its continuity and identity with itself, so it was with the Personality of Yahweh in the thought of the prophets. He is always the same, a definite and very present Person, throughout all history. He whom they

proclaim to be absolute Sovereign is the same Person as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who brought Israel out of Egypt by His servant Moses, the God of the Covenant of Mount Sinai, the national God of Israel. They never lose their grip upon this historic Personality, nor do they ever find it too narrow for their ideas, nor penetrate through it to something beyond. Quite on the contrary, the Personality of Yahweh expands before their view as it were, till they see that beside Him there is room for none else ; He fills their mental horizon from pole to pole, and language fails them to express the greatness of this concept. The Personality of Yahweh is the very essence and foundation of their monotheism. It is as though it had become impressed upon their consciousness in some overwhelming inner experience, so that go where they will, they cannot escape from Him.

Yet another point in regard to which the mono-Yahwists appear to be on the same intellectual level as their contemporary polytheists must be noticed. It is characteristic of polytheism that it ascribes to its gods a mental life the same in kind as that of man. Primitive man had no conception of any type of mental life but his own ; and accordingly, even in the later polytheistic age, it was assumed that the gods were of like passions with men. Now it is true that neither fear nor a sense of bodily distress is ever ascribed to Yahweh by the mono-Yahwists, but apart from these they think of Him as experiencing much the same range of thought, feeling, and will as men and as the polytheistic gods. Love and hatred, anger and compassion, fury and tenderness, grief and joy, delight and abhorrence, repentance, determination, and jealousy, are all predicted of the one and only God without any apparent trace of a feeling of incongruity.¹ It is true that the great unknown prophet of the exile says ‘ my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Yahweh. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts ’

¹ Cf. Mal. i 2 ; Isa. i 13, 14 ; x 5, 6 ; xliii 4 ; lxii 4 ; lxiii 3, 4 ; lxxv 19 ; Jer. xxxiii 5 ; Joel ii 13 ; Amos v 21 ; vii 3, 6 ; Zech. viii 14, 15, &c.

(Isa. lv 8-9). But the fact that the two are comparable shows that the difference is one of degree rather than of essence ; and the context makes it clear that the prophet has in mind the superiority of Yahweh's moral character over that of man. For while one is justified in saying that the mono-Yahwists have no hesitation in ascribing to Yahweh a consciousness which does not differ in kind from that of men, one must always make the reservation that, in regard to moral character, they place Him on a different level from man.

But there is still another point in regard to which the mono-Yahwists appear to be at one with the polytheists as against the philosophers. It was pointed out above that any one who arrives at a monotheistic position by observing and reflecting upon the facts of nature will cease to regard any one of the traditional outward systems of religion and any one outward religious fellowship as being especially favoured by the Deity. No one race has a right to think that God is specially interested in them to the exclusion of others, since He has created all alike ; nor can any one system of worship claim superiority over others, since He has authorized either all alike or none at all. But the mono-Yahwists do not take this attitude by any means. The common Semitic notion was that to each tribe or nation there corresponded its own special god. ' The fundamental conception of ancient religion is the solidarity of gods and their worshippers as part of one organic society.'¹ The mono-Yahwists are much more nearly in accord with this notion than with the philosophical doctrine. For in their view Yahweh and Israel are related to each other as God and people ; and they demand from Israel, and from Israel alone, that obedience which is due from a people to its God. If we took away from them this belief that the one Almighty and All-holy God is interested in Israel far more than in any other race ; that He has granted privileges to Israel incomparably greater than any He has granted to any other people ; and that consequently He has a right

¹ W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 32 ; cf. Barton, *Study of Semitic Origins*, p. 81.

to expect far more from Israel than from others—if we took this belief from them, we should have to re-write their prophecies from beginning to end. It is just because the Almighty has chosen Israel out of all the nations of the earth to stand towards Himself in the relation of a people, the special objects of His cherishing love and protection, the recipients of His self-revelation and self-communication, that unfaithfulness to this relation entails such fearful punishment. ‘Hear this word that Yahweh hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth ; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.’¹ In the view of the mono-Yahwists, the one and only God occupies to Israel a position analogous to that which the gods of polytheism were supposed to occupy towards their peoples ; there is only one difference, a difference which, however important from other points of view, does not affect the present argument ; Yahweh, because His moral character is not like that of other gods, deals with His people in a different way ; He will punish them if they refuse to obey His moral commands.

And since Yahweh stands in this relation to Israel it follows that He does not stand in the same relation to other peoples. The prophets are never weary of declaiming against the gods worshipped by other nations. They are contrasted with Yahweh as the Creator of the universe is contrasted with the work of men’s hands ;² or as subordinate beings are contrasted with their sovereign (Deut. iv 19–20) ; or else they are roundly declared not to be gods at all except in name (Jer. ii 11) ; and to be mere vanity, nothingness ;³ or various names implying a scornful abhorrence are used.⁴ It is quite in harmony with this that to worship

¹ Amos iii 1, 2 ; cf. Deut. iv 37–40 ; vii 6–11 ; x 12–17 ; xiv 2 ; 1 Kings viii 53 ; Ps. xxxiii 12 ; cxxxv 4 ; Jer. xiii 11 ; xiv 21 ; xxxiii 9 ; Hos. xi 1, &c. &c.

² Isa. xl 12–26, &c. ; Ps. cxv 3–8 ; cxxxv 5–17 ; Jer. ii 27 f. ; x 1–10 ; xvi 19–21 ; Hab. ii 18–20 ; cf. Deut. xxviii 36, 64.

³ Jer. ii 5 ; viii 19 ; xiv 22 ; xviii 15 ; 1 Kings xvi 13 ; 2 Kings xvii 15.

⁴ Jer. iv 1 ; vii 30 ; 1 Kings xi 5 ; xxi 26 ; 2 Kings xvii 12 ; xxiii 13, 24 ; see Kautzsch, *Hastings’s D. B.*, v 681.

these gods should be regarded as the worst sin Israel can commit ; it is treachery, adultery, the violation of the Covenant, entailing the severest punishment. According to the view of the mono-Yahwists, there is a deep line of cleavage running across the religious world ; on the one side is the sunshine of the knowledge, favour, and service of the one true God, and the people of Israel ; on the other side is darkness, the worship of demons, or of mere wood and stone, of nonentities, and the rest of mankind. According to the mono-Yahwists, what Israel worshipped was the living God, the only proper object of human devotion, whereas the things which occupied an analogous position and stood to other nations as the objects of their worship could claim no share in the living God ; they were totally unfit to be worshipped by men. Throughout the Old Testament there runs the idea that there is one outward system of religion and one outward religious fellowship which contain within themselves all the religious privileges which are worth having ; Israel is the peculiar people of the Living God.

The study of what is commonly called Comparative Religion has made us familiar with a certain conception of religion as one universal fact. The idea is that there is but one God who is above all, and through all, and in all, and who is really the object of worship in every religion and whose presence gives to each religion its own degree of truth and reality ; under so many different names and forms all mankind are really worshipping one and the same God ; hence the religion of the human race is a single fact, a vast unity, running through all ages and races in so many different temporary embodiments and outward forms, and in so many varying degrees of reality and truth. With the truth or falsity of this conception we are not now concerned. It is introduced here only in order to contrast it with the doctrine of the mono-Yahwists from which it differs *toto caelo*. There is a strange eagerness on the part of some writers to fix upon the prophets a teaching akin to this modern view, and loud are their praises when they think they have detected it. It has been argued, for

instance, that because to Amos Yahweh is a God of righteousness, and because right is right and wrong is wrong all the world over, therefore Amos extends Yahweh's sphere beyond the limits of the nation of Israel and makes the Yahweh religion universal. 'In Amos it (the religion of Israel) breaks for the first time through the bonds of nationality and becomes a universal religion instead of the religion of a single people. . . . National boundaries fell before the universal power of justice.'¹

Again, it is thought that because Jeremiah speaks of a Covenant written upon the heart, therefore he, too, is a universalist and steps beyond all outward national organizations and limitations.² But this surely rests upon a misconception. We, in our day, can see that these doctrines of the righteousness of Yahweh and the inwardness of religion are the ideas which have made the Jewish religion fitted to become the religion of many other races; and again, it is easy for us to take special ideas and isolated phrases from the prophets and draw out what is to us their logical implication of universalism, when once we have transposed these phrases from the intellectual atmosphere of the prophets to our own congenial philosophy. But the question is, did the prophets themselves draw these deductions? Did they follow out in their own minds this train of reasoning? The answer ought not to be in doubt. They have left no trace of these deductions in their writings, but on the contrary, they tell us the exact opposite. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth,' are the words of Amos (iii 2). And if Jeremiah does speak of a new Covenant, it is 'a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah' (xxxi 31). Jeremiah, indeed, believes that it is as impossible that the old relationship between Yahweh and Israel should come to an end, as that day and night should cease. Yahweh is no more likely to terminate the one than the other (Jer. xxxi 35-7; xxxiii 20-6).

The reason why they were not universalists is not far to seek. There was a certain logical coherence and consistency about their mono-Yahwism which the adoption of

¹ Cornill, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 45 f.

² See Cornill, *op. cit.* 96-8.

a universalistic conception such as this would have thrown into utter confusion. It is not too much to say that if they had ceased to believe in the exclusive privileges of Israel, they would soon have ceased to be monotheists. If one starts from the common Semitic notion that to each nation or tribe there corresponds its own God, this attitude of the prophets is strictly logical and coherent. Israel alone worships Yahweh and Yahweh is the only God, therefore all other worship but that of Israel is false and misleading. And the more thoroughly convinced they are of the sole Deity of Yahweh, the more impossible it must have been to imagine that the worship of other gods had any truth or validity. To introduce into their thought the idea of a religion made universal through the breaking down of all existing barriers and outward distinctions is to make their position as mono-Yahwists illogical and untenable. The moment they began to admit that the worship which Moab, for instance, offered to Chemosh was in any sense a worship of the living God, that moment they would have begun to abandon their mono-Yahwism; for the Moabites worshipped not Yahweh, the only God, but a deity who was sharply distinguished from Yahweh.

Malachi i 11 is often quoted as proving the growth of a monotheistic conception which transcends all outward forms and national limitations and sees the worship of the one true God in every existing religion.¹ 'For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith Yahweh of hosts.' The context requires one to take the verbs in the present; this worship is not something in the future, but is being offered to Yahweh at the time the prophet writes. To interpret the passage as referring to worship offered to Yahweh by Jews resident among the Gentiles gives it an excellent sense; for the prophet would then be upbraiding the negligence of the Palestinian Jews by pointing to the more acceptable offerings of the Jews of the Dispersion which

¹ Cf. Driver, *Christianity and other Religions*, pp. 32-46.

are pure, even though offered in a Gentile country. The other view is not without serious objection. It makes this passage stand alone, without a parallel, in the Old Testament or in the Apocalyptic writings. It introduces a mode of conceiving of the one God which belongs to a different intellectual and religious environment and throws the whole system of mono-Yahwism into confusion. Hence it seems better to understand this passage as referring to the service rendered to the one God Yahweh by Israelites in foreign lands.¹

Such universalism as is to be found in the prophets always has reference to a future time, to a period during which Yahweh's true character and omnipotence will be revealed in a way which none can ignore. The universal religion which they foresee is the religion of Israel and the worship of Yahweh. This religion is to become universal, because the Gentiles will abandon their own religions for that of Israel. It may be necessary to force this upon them by the execution of a terrible judgement, or they may come to acknowledge it voluntarily; but in either case, it is Israel's God who is recognized to be the universal God, and Israel's religion which is to become the universal religion. 'I am Yahweh, and there is none else; beside me there is no God . . . that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am Yahweh, and there is none else' (Isa. xlv 5, 6). 'At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Yahweh; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil hearts.'²

But all this is to take place in the future at a time which has not yet arrived. For the present, the worship of the true God is confined to Israel. It is essential to grasp clearly the fact that the prophets held simultaneously two positions which to many minds of the present day seem almost contradictory. (1) There is only one God who is

¹ Cf. Sayce in *Expositor* for August 1911.

² Jer. iii 17; cf. Isa. ii 2-4; xix 18-25; lx 1-22; Jer. iv 2; xii 16 f.; xvi 19-21; Zeph. iii 9; Zech. ii 11; viii 20-3, &c. See Kautzsch, *op. cit.* pp. 711 f., and see below, pp. 192-195.

sovereign lord over all creation ; (2) this God is the God of the nation of Israel alone. All other religions, not being the worship of this true God, are vain, the service of demons or of nonentities. Both these positions were held consciously and firmly by the same minds and at the same time. To one who reaches monotheism through philosophy, they appear almost contradictory ; but to one who starts from the presuppositions of the prophetic age, they form part of a coherent system of thought.

For mono-Yahwism, as a system of theology, is thoroughly intelligible and consistent with itself, once we realize that the mono-Yahwists shared in the intellectual limitations of the polytheistic stage of culture. They proclaim a God whose existence is recognized by the polytheists as well as themselves, and they know that when they utter the word 'Yahweh', they have in mind the same Personal Being as He whom the polytheists knew by that name ; they assume His existence and His accessibility to prayer just as the polytheists do ; they think of Him as experiencing a kind of emotional and volitional life not totally dissimilar from that usually ascribed to the polytheistic gods ; and finally, they share the common Semitic notion, that He is united to a particular people in whom He takes an especial interest to the exclusion of others who have no right to make any claim upon His favour. The great startling difference is this, that whereas the polytheists maintain that this God is merely a characteristic Semitic deity, the mono-Yahwists proclaim Him to be the only God, the sole Sovereign and Creator of the Universe, and that in moral character He is absolutely righteous. Philosophical monotheism is also a logical and coherent system of thought, and it must not be overlooked that in every point in which mono-Yahwism stands related to the polytheistic conceptions, it stands in marked contrast to the philosophical doctrine. The two systems are opposed throughout ; in the assumption without question or reason of the existence of a personal divine Being ; in the identification of the one and only God with one of the gods worshipped by polytheists ; in the vivid life of emotion and volition ascribed to Him ; in His exclusive

union with a single special religious system and fellowship ; in all these points mono-Yahwism stands contrasted with philosophical monotheism.

One cannot help feeling that many works on the Old Testament are spoiled by a failure to grasp the essential difference between the mono-Yahwist and the modern conceptions of God. Both the mono-Yahwist and the modern mind could agree in saying that God is the Creator of the Universe and that God was the God of Israel. The difference lies in a different mental attitude towards these two statements. To say that God is the Creator is to the modern mind merely to state what is involved in the very idea of God ; for to many of us ' God ' means simply that which explains the existence of the world. Again, to say that God was the God of Israel is not involved in our idea of God, for we can think of God's existence without this being implied. Every one will agree that ' God ' is the Creator ; but not every one will equate Him with the object of Israel's worship. This latter represents an element of faith, something which is not involved in our very idea of God's existence. But the mono-Yahwist reversed the emphasis. Union with Israel was the idea involved in the existence of the God he recognized ; while the Creatorship of this God represented the element of faith. He knew that the God he worshipped existed, because Israel existed. The existence of Israel's God was a fact, of which Israel's national self-consciousness was the undeniable self-evident proof. The point which was not involved in his idea of this God's existence was the assertion that He is supreme Sovereign of the universe. That Yahweh was God of Israel could be disputed by none ; that He was the only God and supreme Lord of Creation was just what the contemporaries of the mono-Yahwists found it impossible to believe.

The importance of this distinction may be illustrated in two ways. We may say with Riehm that ' the foundation of the consciousness of Israel, as regards his peculiar relation to God, is the belief that Jehovah, the Lord of the world, has in the absolute freedom of His gracious will chosen Israel from among all the peoples of the earth to be His

peculiar people'.¹ No exception can be taken to this position itself ; it is entirely true of the mono-Yahwists ; and we may go on with Riehm to show how this root-idea of the Covenant, under the changing circumstances of advancing years, 'necessarily tended to produce from this germ the expectation of fresh revelations.'² And to this extent Riehm has explained the origin of Messianic prophecy. But when he assumes that, in the minds of the Israelite, 'Jehovah' and 'the Lord of the world' are synonymous and identical, he is assuming just the point which stands most in need of explanation. If this much be granted, the rest follows ; but in granting this, the whole problem of the Old Testament and of the Hebrew monotheism is not solved but overlooked. And for this reason Riehm's account of the inspiration of and the revelation to the Hebrew prophets is necessarily defective.

Again, take the words of the ancient Hebrew Psalm : 'In his hand are the deep places of the earth ; and the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, and he made it : and his hands prepared the dry land.' The repetition of these words by modern minds is scarcely an act of faith or of praise at all ; it is simply a poetic statement of what is involved in our very idea of God's existence. But we may be quite sure that the Psalmist meant to express something more than the connotation of the word 'God'. What he meant was that this particular divine Person, Yahweh, the God of Israel, was Creator and Supreme Sovereign of the world. This was, on his part, an act of magnificent faith and of the highest praise, because it was by no means a self-evident fact that the God of Israel was the only God.

II

But one must now raise the question whether the prophets became convinced of the truth of mono-Yahwism by any process of reasoning. There are at least two sets of data which might have formed the basis of a reasoned argument ending in monotheism : the facts of nature, and the facts

¹ *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 68.

² *Ib.* p. 88.

of history. Since both of these are conceivable as a source of the Hebrew monotheism, it will be necessary to examine the literature of the Hebrews to see whether any trace of arguments of this kind can be found.

It has already been seen how the observation of the facts of nature, of the uniformity and continuity of natural causation, gradually drove the old Greek polytheism off the field and prepared the way for the advance to monotheism. Did the Hebrew monotheists travel by the same road? Do they show a more accurate knowledge of nature than their contemporaries? Did they have an insight into the secrets of natural causation so much deeper than any of their fellow Semites, that while the latter were still in the polytheistic stage of thought and culture, the prophets had already pierced through the veil of phenomena to a spiritual unity behind the whole?

What kind of natural science, then, is to be found in the Hebrew literature? What idea of the universe and of causation is presented by the mono-Yahwists? For the purpose of this investigation one may treat the Old Testament as a whole; for while it very often reflects the opinions of those who were not mono-Yahwists, yet the whole literature comes to us after having been carefully reviewed and edited by mono-Yahwists, if not actually composed by them in the first place. And it is of importance to note that one and the same conception of causation and of Yahweh's relation to the world runs throughout the whole and is common to all the writers. We are able to form a clear picture of the world and its happenings as it appeared to the Hebrews; and it may be added that, so far as concerns natural science and the conception of how things are made to happen, the Old Testament proves itself to belong to the polytheistic stage of culture.

In examining the Old Testament conception of causation, it is necessary to adopt some system of classifying the immense number of events which are said to have taken place. It will be most convenient to divide them into the following large classes: (1) those which are counted on to recur regularly; and (2) those which cannot be counted on

to occur regularly. This latter class may again be divided into (a) events which imply a startling reversal of the usual ; (b) those which are merely variations of the usual, i. e. things which do occur more or less often and are familiar phenomena of life, but yet cannot be depended on to recur at special times or at regular intervals ; (c) a very large class of events such as the outbreak and issue of warfare, the rise and fall of nations, and in general the history of the Hebrews and their relations to other nations. It is sometimes difficult to say in which class an event should be placed, especially in the case of (a) and (b). Class (b) is somewhat indefinite. Under it are considered things which certainly surprised the Hebrews as being very abnormal, and also events of which it may appear hard to say that they are variations from the normal. Can one think of a thunderstorm or a gale of wind as a variation of normal weather ? From the Hebrew point of view such happenings are explained in exactly the same way as the behaviour of the oxen in 1 Sam. vi, of the lion in 1 Kings xiii 24-9, and of the ravens in 1 Kings xvii 4-6. But while this classification may not be ideal from many points of view, all that is claimed for it is that it enables one to review a complex mass of facts in a comprehensive manner and to elicit their evidence in an intelligible form. It will be seen that throughout the whole of the Old Testament but one cause is offered as an explanation of all that happens—the almighty sovereign will of Yahweh. This, however, needs one qualification ; the human will is not bound ; it is a real source of causation ; but the relations between the human and divine wills are nowhere clearly thought out.

(1) It has been said above that human life, even in the most primitive communities, cannot continue except on the belief that certain things will repeat themselves in the future as they have done in the past. All men expect the sun to rise, the moon to pass through her phases, and the seasons to succeed each other in due course. The husbandman counts on the annual rainfall and the fertility of the soil, just as the hunter and the herdsman rely on animals to continue to act as they have done before. Similarly, all

men recognize that a human life will follow the regular course of birth, growth, maturity, old age, and death ; and that the appetites, interests, and bodily functions of all men are much alike.

Of such general regularities as these, the Hebrews were plainly conscious and ascribed them all to the will of Yahweh. It was the God of the Hebrews who said, ' Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night ; and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years ; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth ' (Gen. i 14, 15) ; it was Yahweh who set His bow in the clouds as a guarantee that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh (Gen. ix 13-16) ; who promised that ' while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease '.¹ Similarly, with regard to the phenomena on which the husbandman and the herdsman depend. It is Yahweh who sends the rain which is expected in its season, the former and the latter rain.² The same God is responsible for the general principles of the fertility of the soil and of animals, and of the reproduction of like by like ;³ and He made provision for the food of all.⁴ And, again, all the constant phenomena of human life are established by His will. He created them male and female, commanded them to be fruitful and to have dominion over the rest of creation ;⁵ He established the law of pain in childbirth (Gen. iii 16), and of human toil (Gen. iii 17-19). He confounded the languages of men and scattered them abroad (Gen. xi 9). He gave man hearing and sight, and His eyes watch over the development of the human embryo.⁶ Again, it is the lot of all men to die ;⁷ and the limit to which a man may expect

¹ Gen. viii 22 ; cf. Ps. civ 19 ; Jer. xxxi 35, 36 ; xxxiii 20, 21, &c.

² Deut. xi 11, 12, 14 ; Joel ii 23 ; cf. Gen. ii 5 ; Ps. civ 13 ; cxlvii 8 ; Isa. xxx 23 ; Jer. v 24 ; xiv 22.

³ Gen. i 11, 12, 20-2 ; cf. Isa. xxviii 24-9.

⁴ Gen. i 29, 30 ; Ps. civ 14-16, 21, 27, 28 ; cxlv 15, 16, &c.

⁵ Gen. i 27-9 ; cf. Ps. cxxvii 2, 3.

⁶ Ps. xciv 9 ; cxxxix 14-16 ; Exod. iv 11 ; Prov. xx 12.

⁷ Gen. xlvii 28, 29 ; Joshua xxiii 14 ; Job xiv 10, 11.

his life to run is set, like all other general rules, by the will of Yahweh.¹

It is not too much to say that everything which may be relied on to recur with any regularity does so because Yahweh has willed it thus. If we could assume that when Yahweh is said to have spoken, or to have done this or that, the writers were consciously using a figure of speech, the Old Testament conception thus far considered does not present a wide divergence from the modern conception of 'natural law' as the expression of God's will. But when we come to ask how the will of Yahweh is believed to operate, we find at once that the Old Testament writers are not using a figure of speech; for the uniformities of their environment did not appear to them as 'natural laws' in our sense of the term. There are no indications that the Hebrews thought of the will of Yahweh as being mediated through long trains of natural causation, or carried out by forces which are in themselves impersonal, unfeeling, and invariable. The conception is rather that all created objects are endowed with sufficient mental equipment to be capable of receiving Yahweh's commands and acting upon them.² This is the way in which, throughout the Old Testament, the will of Yahweh is held to operate. He commands and the objects He has created obey. The regularities represent, as it were, the standing orders He has given; anything else is a special command for a definite occasion. The regularities in nature are called by the general term 'ordinances' (חֻקִּים or חֻקֹּת; חֻשְׁפֵּי in Ps. cxix 91). Thus there are 'weeks of the ordinances of the harvest' (Jer. v 24); ordinances of the moon and the stars (Jer. xxxi 34, 35); ordinances of heaven and earth.³ Human life, again, has an ordinance (חֻק) as its prescribed limit (Job xiv 5, 13); and the waters of the sea are kept in their place by an ordinance or boundary which they may not pass.⁴ These ordinances are not thought of as natural laws. The Hebrew words (חֻק

¹ Job xiv 5; cf. Ps. xc 10; xxxix 4, 5.

² Cf. Koeberle, *Natur u. Geist*, p. 253; cf. pp. 111-13.

³ Jer. xxxiii 25; Job xxxviii 33; Ps. cxlviii 6.

⁴ Jer. v 22; Job xxvi 10; xxxviii 10; Prov. viii 27, 29.

and מִשְׁפָּט) are used over and over again for the rules of conduct which Yahweh has given to Israel summed up under the general term 'Law' or 'Torah'; when so used they are translated 'statutes' and 'judgements'. Yahweh is conceived of as imposing 'statutes' or rules of conduct upon other created objects just as He does on men. 'Thus saith Yahweh, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, if these ordinances depart from me . . . ' (Jer. xxxi 35, 36). 'If my covenant of day and night stand not, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth' (Jer. xxxiii 25). 'For ever, O Yahweh, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances; For all things are thy servants' (Ps. cxix 89-91). 'When he gave to the sea its bound (חֲסוֹם) that the waters should not transgress his commandment (לֹא יַעֲבֹרֵי פִי). When he marked out (בְּחִיקוֹ) the foundations of the earth' (Prov. viii 29, cf. 27). Again we hear of Yahweh as 'calling for the waters of the sea, and pouring them out on the face of the earth' (Amos v 8; ix 6); as bringing out the host of the stars by number and calling them all by name (Isa. xl 26, cf. Ps. cxlvii 4); and as calling for a famine (2 Kings viii 1; Ps. cv 16), or for a drought (Hag. i 11). He lays His commands upon His creatures (Isa. xlv 12; Ps. cxlviii 5, 6; Job xxxviii 12); and when He calls, they answer or stand up together (Isa. xlviii 13, cf. xl 26); 'Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send forth lightnings that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?' (Job xxxviii 33-5, cf. Jer. li 15, 16). Jeremiah can upbraid Israel by comparing its unfaithfulness with the obedience of the stork. 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the ordinance (מִשְׁפָּט) of Yahweh.'¹

¹ Jer. viii 7; cf. Ps. civ 19; and see also Koeberle, *Natur u. Geist*, pp. 111-13.

This idea that Yahweh issues commands to a world of animated objects is finely expressed in the Book of Job. Yahweh 'covereth his hands with the lightning; and giveth it a charge that it should strike the mark' (xxxvi 32).

God thundereth marvellously with his voice;
Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.
For he saith to the snow, Fall thou on the earth;
Likewise to the shower of rain.

And to the showers of his mighty rain.

He scaleth up the hand of every man:

That all men whom he hath made may know it.

Then the beasts go into the coverts,

And remain in their dens.

Out of the chamber of the south cometh the storm.

And cold out of the north.

By the breath of God ice is given:

And the breadth of the waters is straitened,

Yea, he ladeth the thick cloud with moisture;

He spreadeth abroad the cloud of his lightning.

And it is turned round about by his guidance,

That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them.

Upon the face of the habitable world:

Whether it be for correction, or for his land,

Or for mercy, that he cause it to come.

Hearken unto this, O Job:

Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.

Dost thou know how God layeth *his charge* upon them? ¹

We learn also that Yahweh commands the sun not to rise (Job ix 7), and the clouds not to rain (Isa. v 6; cf. Ps. lxxviii 23, 24); He rebukes the sea and it is dried up (Nahum i 4; Ps. cvi 9; Mal. iii 11); He commands and raises the stormy wind (Ps. cvii 25). 'He sendeth out his commandment upon earth; His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them; He causeth his wind to blow and the waters flow' (Ps. cxlvii 15-18). There is no difference between these commands and the charges He is constantly

¹ אֵלֶּיָּהֶם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה Job xxxvii 5-15; cf. Ps. civ 5-9; cxlvii 14-18.

represented as laying upon animals to accomplish His will. If those whom He has determined to punish be hid from His sight 'in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them' (Amos ix 3). So also, He spake to the fish and it vomited out Jonah (Jonah ii 10); and He commanded the ravens to feed Elijah, just as He gave the same charge to the widow woman of Zarephath.¹ In the light of this evidence, one can scarcely refuse to take the commands which God is said to utter in Gen. i in a literal sense (cf. Ps. xxxiii 9). It is evident, then, that the uniformities of nature seemed to the Old Testament writers to be the immediate consequence or expression of Yahweh's commands, and not merely instances of the working of impersonal laws and forces.

This conclusion is supported by two further considerations. We sometimes meet with a complaint that man is utterly unable to comprehend how or by what means God has brought into existence and sustains all that is—'I have seen the travail which God hath given the sons of men to be exercised therewith. He hath made everything beautiful in its time; also he hath set the world in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even unto the end.'² And, again, while the Old Testament does recognize a certain unity and harmony in the way in which things work together, that harmony and unity are not seen to be of the essential nature of things themselves any more than their uniformities are, but to be due to Yahweh, whose beneficent will has ordered them thus. The language used forbids one to think that the Hebrews have passed through that stage of observation and reflection in which things are seen to act together because such is their very nature; they do not start from the unity and harmony of things, and argue to the unity and beneficence of God; but, beginning with the belief that Yahweh is alone Creator of all, they see indications of His benevolence in the works He has made. The one hundred and fourth and one hundred and forty-seventh psalms are the

¹ 1 Kings xvii 4, 9; cf. Ps. cv 31, 34; Jer. xv 3.

² Eccles. iii 10, 11; cf. i 13; xi 5; Job xxxvii 14-xxxix 30.

classic examples of this. These psalmists delight to describe how Yahweh has set the sea a bound which it may not pass ; how He sends the springs into the valleys where the wild asses may quench their thirst ; how He waters the hills and causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb, wine, and oil for the service of men ; how He provides a home for the birds, the wild goats, and the conies ; how He makes the night for the beasts to roam in and the day for men to work. And they call on all creation to join in a triumphant song of thanksgiving to Yahweh for all His mercy and kindness (cf. Ps. cxlviii).

The eyes of all wait upon thee ;
 And thou givest them their meat in due season.
 Thou openest thine hand,
 And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
 Yahweh is righteous in all his ways,
 And gracious in all his works.
 Yahweh is nigh unto all them that call upon him,
 To all that call upon him in truth.
 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him.
 He also will hear their cry and will save them.¹

This is but the expression in verse of what the first chapter of Genesis says in prose. God provided the lights to be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and He gave every herb and every tree for meat for man and beast. ' And God saw that it was good.' Both here and in the Psalms, things exhibit a unity and a harmony because each has an immediate relation to an almighty and benevolent will. ' For the word of Yahweh is right ; and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loveth righteousness and judgement : The earth is full of the lovingkindness of Yahweh ' (Ps. xxxiii 4, 5 ; cf. cxi 8, 9).

Happy indeed was the Hebrew and secure his peace of mind, when he thus believed that the world in which he lived his life was under the close supervision of a faithful and loving God, who rejoiced to supply all the wants of His creatures and had undertaken to see that no sudden destruction should come upon His universe. And double

¹ Ps. cxlv 15-19.

and treble was the Hebrew's cause for gratitude when he bethought him how this God had chosen Israel for Himself, to be His peculiar treasure above all the nations of the earth, the special objects of His cherishing love and protection, and how His ears are ever open and attentive to their prayers (cf. Ps. xxxiii 12-22). 'Happy is the people, that is in such a case: Yea, happy is the people, whose God is Yahweh' (Ps. cxliv 15).

(2) Proceeding next to consider the causation of those events which cannot be relied on to recur regularly, we take up first those which imply a startling reversal of the usual order of things. Since the order and regularity visible in the world is not in the very nature of the things themselves, but is due to the commands which Yahweh has imposed upon them, it is easy to understand how the Hebrews felt no difficulty in conceiving that the normal course might be altered or even overthrown in the most astonishing way; it only needs that Yahweh should issue new orders to His creatures.

The future, especially the Messianic future, the 'Day' when Yahweh will make a special manifestation of Himself, is looked upon as a time in which He may be expected to make signal changes in the present order of things. Sometimes these changes are of a terrifying and destructive character. 'I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Yahweh come' (Joel ii 30, 31; cf. iii. 15, 16). 'And it shall come to pass in that day', saith the Lord Yahweh, 'that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.'¹ But the changes are very often such as will make the earth a pleasanter, happier, and safer place for human habitation, or rather, for the habitation of the Israelites. 'It shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters; and a fountain

¹ Amos viii 9; Isa. iv 5; xiii 9-13; xxxiv 4, 9-17; Ezek. xxxii 3-9; Mic. i 4; Nahum i 5; Hab. iii 10, 11; Hag. ii 6, 21; Zech. xiv 4-8.

shall come forth of the house of Yahweh and shall water the vale of Shittim' (Joel iii 18). 'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind. . . . There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat. . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox: and dust shall be the serpent's meat.'¹ In 'the new heavens and the new earth', birth and death, seed-time and harvest, eating and drinking, continue as before. Yet it is clear that this is not said out of any respect for natural law or the nature of things, for the prophet does not regard it as impossible that the wolf should become herbivorous like the lamb, and the lion eat straw like the ox. That there should be rivers in the desert is described as something 'new', something which Yahweh has not done before, but that constitutes no reason why, if He wills it, He should not do it in the future.² If the ordinary routine of nature is but the behest of Yahweh, it is easy to understand the confidence with which Isaiah proposes that Ahaz should ask a sign 'either in the depth or in the height above' (Isa. vii 11). Yahweh only has to will and anything may be accomplished, even to the bringing back of the shadow on the sundial of Ahaz.³

With such a conception of the relation of Yahweh to the world, one can scarcely be surprised to meet a large number of traditions narrating the marvellous things which Yahweh did for His people Israel when He delivered them from Egypt and brought them into Canaan, and for His prophets on whom His Spirit rested. The plagues of Egypt, the wonders performed in the desert and at the conquest of Palestine, the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, presented no

¹ Isa. lxv 17, 21-2, 25; cf. lx 19-22; xi 6-9; xxx 25, 26.

² Isa. xliii 19, 20; cf. Ps. cvii 33-8.

³ 2 Kings xx 9-11; Isa. xxxviii 5-8.

such difficulties to the Hebrews as they do to those whose thought is dominated by the idea of natural law and natural causation. To the Hebrew they merely indicated that Yahweh had seen fit on these special occasions to order things to act otherwise than they usually do.

But, besides those startling reversals of the usual, there is a very large class of happenings with which all men are familiar, for they may take place at any time, but which cannot be counted on to occur at any particular moment, nor can any one predict in just what particular manner they will appear. A very large number of such events may be summed up under such general heads as the changes in the weather from day to day and hour to hour, pests and blights which injure the crops, and other misfortunes such as disease, epidemics, and a premature death. It may be well to notice here that the Hebrews recognized, in a limited number of instances, the existence of what we call natural causes. They knew that clouds bring rain.¹ They observed that their harvests depended on the rainfall and that vegetation in general required moisture. 'No plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up, for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.'² They noticed the effects of the wind. It dries up the water (Gen. viii 1; Hos. xiii 15), and brought the quails (Num. xi 31); the north wind brings rain (Prov. xxv 23); the east wind blasts the ears of corn (Gen. xli 6, 23, 27), causes the sea to go back (Exod. xiv 21) and brings the locusts (Exod. x 13); while the west wind drives the locusts into the Red Sea (Exod. x 19). But it is questionable whether these were regarded in any real sense as instances of 'natural causation'. They are rather the instruments or tools which Yahweh uses to accomplish these particular ends. In that

¹ 1 Kings xviii 44-6; Eccles. xi 3; Ps. lxxvii 17; cxlvii 8; Prov. xxv 14.

² Gen. ii 5; cf. Deut. xi 10-14; xxviii 12; 1 Kings viii 35, 36; Joel ii 23, 24; Amos iv 6, 7; Ezek. xxxi 4, 5; xxxiv 26; Jer. xiv 2-6; Isa. i 30; xxvii 3; xlv 3, 4, 14; lv 10; lviii 11; Ps. i 3; lxv 9-13; lxxviii 9, 10; civ 13-16; Eccles. ii 6; Job viii 11; xiv 7-9, &c.

dry eastern land the wonderful outburst of vegetation and the plentiful rainfall which preceded it could scarcely fail to become so closely associated together in the thoughts of the Hebrews that the one at once suggested the other. Similarly, a violent wind and its natural effects, being both phenomena which obtrude themselves upon the attention of the least observant, become so closely associated together that one is not thought of without the other. Where any natural sequence is clearly marked, the Hebrews regarded the first as the instrument which Yahweh used to accomplish the end He had in view, which is represented by the last event of the series. When Yahweh wishes to break up the ship in which Jonah is fleeing to Tarshish, He does not cause the sea to rock in the midst of a calm ; that is not His method ; He sends out a great wind into the sea and there is a mighty tempest (Jonah i 4). Similarly, when God wishes to destroy Jonah's gourd, He prepared a worm to smite the gourd ; and when He wished to make Jonah faint, He prepared the sultry east wind as the means of bringing this about. But wherever the result which Yahweh wills to bring about has not become habitually associated with some preceding natural event, there the will of Yahweh is thought of as acting immediately without any intervening causes. Thus, because the natural causes for the appearance of the gourd at that particular moment are not obvious, God is said to have prepared the gourd, just as He prepared the ' great fish ' to swallow up Jonah (Jonah iv 6 ; cf. 7). Similarly, if the east wind brought the quails and the west wind drove them away, it was Yahweh who in both cases brought the wind ; for these winds were not constantly preceded by some other striking natural event which might become closely united with them in memory (Exod. x 13, 19).

It may be laid down as a rule which holds good throughout the Old Testament that wherever the natural causes are in the very least recondite, or rather, where they do not thrust themselves upon an unobservant people, there the Hebrew writers see the will of Yahweh acting immediately in accordance with the feelings or aims which are supposed to be at the time in His mind. The harvest may depend

on the rain and the rain may come from the clouds, but it is always Yahweh who causes the rain or sends the springs into the hills. There was no vegetation, we are told in Genesis ii 4, because Yahweh had not yet caused it to rain.¹ All the phenomena of the weather are regularly ascribed to Yahweh's immediate action. Thunder and lightning and hail are amongst the means which He uses to give His people success against their enemies.² The thunder is the 'voice' of Yahweh,³ and by it He manifests His presence.⁴ The wind again is regularly 'sent forth' by Yahweh;⁵ so also the ice, cold, and snow.⁶ The anger of Yahweh is manifested in the earthquake;⁷ the earth trembles when it sees Him;⁸ and when the hills smoke, He has touched them.⁹ One should not fail to observe that, although such phenomena as rain, thunder, hail, and so forth, must have been familiar events to every Hebrew, yet they are invariably, whenever they occur, ascribed to a special act of Yahweh. Yahweh acts thus because of what is taking place in His consciousness at the time; it never seems to have occurred to them that there could be any other explanation. Is there a drought so that the grass withers and the cattle languish for lack of pasture? It is because Yahweh has seen the wickedness of Israel and is visiting His anger upon them.¹⁰ Similarly, if a pest injures the crops, the only explanation thought of is that Yahweh has done it to punish His people and bring home to them a sense of their sin.¹¹ We are not dealing here with events

¹ Cf. Gen. vii 4; 1 Kings viii 35, 36; xvii 14; xviii 1; Isa. v 6; Jer. v 24; xiv 22; Zech. x 1; Job v 10; Ps. lxxv 9-10; lxxviii 9, 10; civ 13; cxlvii 8, &c.

² Joshua x 11; 1 Sam. vii 10; 2 Sam. xxii 9-15 = Ps. xviii 11-14; cxliv 4.

³ Ps. xxix 3-9; lxxvii 18; Job xxxvii 1-5; Isa. xxx 30.

⁴ 1 Sam. xii 16-18; Ps. cxxxv 7.

⁵ Gen. viii 1 and passages referred to above.

⁶ Ps. cxlvii 16, 17; Job xxxvii 10; Jer. x 12, 13; li 15, 16; Job xxxviii 22-38.

⁷ 2 Sam. xxii 8.

⁸ Ps. lxxvii 16-18; xcvii 4.

⁹ Ps. civ 32; cxliv 5.

¹⁰ Hag. i 9-11; Jer. iii 2, 3; ix 7-12; xii 1-4; Joel i 15-20; Amos iv 6-8; Isa. ix 18-21.

¹¹ Amos iv 9; vii 1-3; Hag. ii 17; cf. Mal. iii 10, 11; 2 Sam. xxi 1-14.

regarded by the Hebrews as specially 'miraculous'; or at least, they are no more miraculous than the thunder-storm and the earthquake. In both cases, there is a special act of Yahweh's will. Some events there are which always, whenever they occurred, represented to the Hebrews a special act of divine volition, such as drought, famine, thunder, &c., and, as will be seen below, sickness of every kind. There are other events which only represent a special act because they appear to differ from what is usual, that is, from the standing orders Yahweh has issued to His creatures. Instances of this latter class are to be found in the behaviour of the lion which slew the prophet and then stood beside his carcass without consuming it or the ass on which the prophet had ridden (1 Kings xiii 24-28); or the behaviour of the kine in 1 Samuel vi 7-12, or that of the ravens in 1 Kings xvii 4-6. All these events gave the Hebrew reason to pause and consider, for all alike indicated to him a special divine volition; but we cannot speak of 'miracles' in our sense of the word. Where natural law is not recognized, there is no recognition of the violation of natural law; but one event becomes more impressive and more worthy of note than another in proportion as it is more contrary to the usual methods of Yahweh, and hence argues a more intense or more emphatic act of will.

When one passes on to consider the bodily misfortunes and ills which befall men from time to time, we get the same impression of Yahweh's relation to the world. The natural causes of sickness and plague do not reveal themselves except to patient research; and so the Hebrews always explained them as the act of Yahweh. Just as the famine which fell on Israel in the days of David was explained as caused by Yahweh 'for Saul and for his bloody house' (2 Sam. xxi 1-14), so also the pestilence must be due to David's sin in the numbering of Israel and ultimately to Yahweh's anger against Israel.¹ When Bathsheba's child was ill, it was because Yahweh had smitten him;² Yahweh

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv = 2 Chron. xxiv 12-14; cf. Num. xi 33; xvi 46; Deut. xxviii; xxix 22-28; xxx 16-18; 2 Chron. xxi 12-14; Exod. v 3; Zech. xiv 12, 18.

² 2 Sam. xii 15.

smote Azariah with leprosy ;¹ and allowed Satan to smite Job with boils.² The act of Yahweh is the only cause ever assigned for a sickness, except it be the obvious result of an accident.³ In some cases no cause at all is mentioned.⁴ An examination of the context of these passages, however, will show that the thought of divine intervention is not necessarily excluded.

It has already been said that the Old Testament recognizes a normal length to human life—a length which Yahweh Himself has determined. But if a man die before his time and not in battle or in conflict with other men, it is because Yahweh has smitten him. When it lay in David's power to kill Saul, he replies to Abishai's suggestion by saying : ' Yahweh shall smite him ; or his day shall come to die ; or he shall go down into battle and perish. Yahweh forbid that I should put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed.'⁵ As with death, so also with birth. The procreation of children by the sexes and the pains of childbirth are the general rules established by Yahweh.⁶ But if a woman have no children, it is because Yahweh has shut her womb ;⁷ and if a woman who has been barren begins to bear children, it is because Yahweh has visited her in His mercy.⁸ That Leah bore children and Rachel did not is said to have been caused by Yahweh, when He saw that Leah was hated (Gen. xxix 31, 33). And so also apparently any man may say that God has given them his children (Gen. xli 52 ; xlviii 9), or any woman (Gen. xxx 17, 20).

Any misfortune of any kind may be ascribed to Yahweh. When the brethren of Joseph find the money in their sacks and are unable to think how it got there, they immediately

¹ 2 Kings xv 5 = 2 Chron. xxvi 20.

² Job ii 7 ; cf. also Exod. iv 24, 25 ; Num. xii 9, 10 ; Ps. xxxix 10, 11 ; 2 Chron. xxi 14, 15.

³ 2 Kings i 2 ; 2 Sam. iv 4.

⁴ 1 Kings xv 23 = 2 Chron. xvi 12 ; 1 Kings xiv 1 ; 2 Kings xx 1 = 2 Chron. xxxii 26.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxvi 10, 11 ; cf. xxv 38 ; Gen. xxxviii 7, 10 ; 1 Kings xvii 17–22 ; 2 Sam. vi 7 ; 2 Chron. xiii 20.

⁶ Gen. i 27, 28 ; iii 16 ; Ps. cxxvii 3.

⁷ Gen. xvi 2 ; cf. xv 3 ; xx 17, 18 ; xxx 2 ; 1 Sam. i 5.

⁸ Gen. xxi 1, 2 ; xxv 21 ; xxx 22 ; 1 Sam. i 19, 20.

ask, 'What is this that God hath done unto us?' (Gen. xlii 28). When the new inhabitants of the cities of Samaria were attacked by lions, it was because Yahweh had sent them.¹ More than once does Jeremiah refer to 'the sword, the famine and the pestilence' as the three modes in which Yahweh vents his wrath upon men.² Similarly, Ezekiel speaks of the sword and the famine and the noisome beasts and the pestilence as 'the four sore judgements of Yahweh.'³ That a thing is a common matter of everyday experience is no reason why it may not be ascribed to Yahweh's intervention. Yahweh causes deep sleep;⁴ Yahweh shut Noah in the ark (Gen. vii 16); Yahweh found room for Isaac (Gen. xxvi 22); Yahweh made homes for the midwives (Exod. i 21); Yahweh makes a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind (Exod. iv 11); Yahweh sent Abigail to meet David (1 Sam. xxv 32); Yahweh helped the Levites who bore the ark (1 Chron. xv 26); King Jehoiakim could not find Jeremiah and Baruch because Yahweh had hidden them (Jer. xxxvi 26).

In reviewing the facts thus far noticed, one cannot but be impressed with the figure of the one Almighty Person who closely watches the doings of men, who is affected by what He sees and hears on earth, and who is ceaselessly and universally, in a thousand ways at once, issuing special directions to His creatures to act in such ways as will manifest His emotions or carry out His purposes. In turning to the history of nations and their relations to each other, this impression is deepened; and at the same time we perceive more clearly than before that there is one great aim which this Almighty Person has in view, and towards the ultimate accomplishment of which all His special acts are directed. That aim is to make for Himself out of the children of Abraham a nation, i.e. an organized body of worshippers, who shall serve and obey Him alone and reflect,

¹ 2 Kings xvii 25; cf. Deut. vii 20; Joshua xxiv 12; Jer. viii 17; xv 3.

² Jer. xiv 12; xxi 6, 9; xxiv 10; xxvii 8; xxix 17; xxxiv 17; xlv 13.

³ Ezek. xiv 21; cf. vi 11, 12; xxviii 23; xxxviii 22, &c.

⁴ 1 Sam. xxvi 12; Gen. ii 21. Cf. Jonah i 5.

in their corporate life and mutual relations, a characteristic of His own—Righteousness. With this principle firmly in hand, the mono-Yahwist writers and editors, the Deuteronomists and priestly scribes, reviewed the whole history of the world and showed how the whole course of things was directed by Yahweh, who called Abraham, brought Israel out of Egypt, fought against the Canaanites and drove them out ; who gave His people rest in the Promised Land ; who punished them by raising up enemies and delivering Israel over to them when they angered Him by their disobedience ; who in mercy heard their cry and saved them when they repented and reformed.¹ And this, too, is the message of the great writing prophets, as is evident on their every page.

When we look back upon the history of the Hebrews, we can see plainly that the pre-exilic prophets were quite right in predicting that defeat and captivity would be the consequence of the course of profligate luxury and unjust oppression of the poor upon which the wealthier classes were bent. We can see that they were right, because our knowledge of social and economic laws tells us that such courses can have but one end—the gradual loss of national vitality. And knowing that these economic and social laws are but the expression of God's will, we say that this was brought upon them by the hand of God. But the Hebrew prophets say nothing of natural law. It is not because they see the inevitable economic results of which this kind of national policy is the cause, that they foretell a punishment from God. It is rather because they know that these things are hateful to Yahweh and that Yahweh will surely punish Israel for them. Where we see the operation of natural law, the prophets saw the mental life of Yahweh. As he looks down from heaven on the course of events, He sees the wickedness of His people and it rouses His anger to raise up enemies against them ;² again, because these enemies are proud and do not recognize that it is His hand

¹ Cf. Gen. xii 1-3 ; Deut. vii 5-16 ; Judges ii 11-23 ; 2 Kings xvii 7-23, &c. &c.

² Isa. v 25, &c. ; Jer. i 15 ; iv 6-8 ; v 14-17 xv 4 ; xxv 9, &c.

which gave them power, He will visit them with punishment even more severe ;¹ and again, when He remembers the covenant He made with their fathers, His compassion is moved and in everlasting love and mercy He will deliver them. ' In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.'²

The Old Testament writers are so confident in seeing the action of Yahweh in everything which takes place in the course of human history as to raise a question about the freedom of the human will. In general whatever has taken place is Yahweh's doing. Time and again the history of the nation is related as the history of Yahweh's doings.³ Sometimes the language used is such as seems to imply bodily action on the part of Yahweh,⁴ or that Yahweh fights in person ;⁵ but as a rule, Yahweh acts through men. He stirs up the minds of men ; of Saul against David ;⁶ or, His anger being kindled against Israel, He moves David to number the nation ;⁷ or He 'sent' enemies against His people.⁸ He moves men to act to their own injury in order to accomplish His purposes.⁹ He has absolute control over the nations ; Israel is in His hands as clay in the hands of a potter ;¹⁰ the Assyrian is as the rod which a man lifts up and shakes, or as the axe with which he fells a tree ;¹¹ any success or reverse in battle may be attributed to Yahweh's doing.¹²

There is no opposition between the human and the divine will ; that which is done by men and fully accounted

¹ Cf. Isa. x 5-19 ; cf. 24-7 ; xiii ; Jer. xliii 10 ; xlv 30, &c.

² Isa. liv 8 ; cf. xlix 14-16 ; Jer. xxxii 37-42, &c. &c.

³ Deut. xi 2-7 ; Joshua xxiv 1-13 ; Ps. xlv 1-3, 7 ; lxxviii 12-72 ; lxxxix 38-45 ; cv 14-44, &c., &c.

⁴ Cf. Jer. xiii 13, 14.

⁵ Isa. xxxiv 1-3 ; Hab. iii 12-14.

⁶ 1 Sam. xxvi 19.

⁷ 2 Sam. xxiv 1 ; cf. 1 Chron. xxi 1 ; 1 Kings xii 15 ; Hag. i 14 ; Zech. viii 10 ; ix 13.

⁸ 1 Kings xi 14, 23 ; 2 Kings xv 37 ; xxiv 2-4, 13, 20.

⁹ Cf. 1 Kings xii 15 ; 2 Kings iii 10 ; Joshua xi 20 ; 2 Sam. xvii 14 ; Exod. xiv 4, &c.

¹⁰ Jer. xviii 6.

¹¹ Isa. x 5, 15.

¹² 1 Sam. xxx 23 ; 2 Sam. v 20 ; x 12 ; 2 Chron. xiv 12 ; 2 Kings v 1 ; x. 32 ; xiii 23, &c.

for by the circumstances and motives of the day is said to be done by Yahweh. Thus, Ahijah prophesies in the name of Yahweh: 'I will cut off from Jeroboam every man child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel, and will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam' (1 Kings xiv 10). And in 1 Kings xv 29, we hear that as soon as Baasha became king, 'he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him; according unto the saying of Yahweh, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the Shilonite.'¹ These cases make it appear at first sight as though Yahweh was believed to guide the minds of men in such a way as to leave them no freedom. But on the other hand, every charge of disobedience and every exhortation to repentance are an indication that, despite the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh, the human will is not bound. And again, even in the execution of His designs, the wills of men are free to go beyond Yahweh's command. 'I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease; for I was but little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.'² Moreover, it was often possible, when one man claimed that an act had been done by Yahweh, that another should meet this with a flat denial.³ Both human freedom and divine sovereignty seem to have been held by the same minds without any attempt to give a clear and logical account of their mutual relations, and, so far as one can see, without any consciousness of a contradiction. The one thing which is clear is that there is no determination in our sense of the word, no idea that the will is governed by the impersonal laws and forces of nature. The relation is that of a stronger will to a weaker one, both of them acting in the same immediate way upon the same environment.

It seems plain, then, that the name 'Yahweh' stood in the mind of the mono-Yahwist for the cause of everything

¹ For similar instances cf. 2 Sam. xii 9-12 with xvi 20-2; 1 Kings xvi 3, 4 with xvi 12; 1 Kings xxi 21-3 with xxii 38; 2 Kings ix 6-10 with ix 25, 26, &c.

² Zech. i 15; cf. 2 Sam. xxiv 13, 14.

³ 2 Sam. iv 8, 11; cf. 2 Sam. xvi 8 with xviii 19, 28, 31.

which he saw taking place about him, whether it were great or small, commonplace or extraordinary, whether it were in the heaven above or in the earth beneath, whether it concerned the life of an individual or the rise and fall of empires—except in that limited sphere and to that limited extent in which the human will acts independently of the divine. While some sequences of natural causation are observed, these sequences are never traced beyond that which obtrudes itself upon the attention of the least observant. Every such sequence of causation ends in the will and mental life of Yahweh, and the point at which it so ends is never far off; nowhere do we find any idea of what we would call ‘a violation of natural law’; the nearest approach to such a conception is found in those cases where Yahweh is thought of as issuing orders to His creatures which reverse or differ widely from those which He has imposed on them for their usual guidance. Once we get outside the range of what is observed and relied on to recur at regular intervals, each event, though it be as familiar and commonplace as thunder or sickness, is caused immediately by a special act of Yahweh’s will. To the mono-Yahwist then, causation was, so far as concerns nature, precisely what it was to the polytheist—the ‘fiat’ of a personal will; the great all-important difference is this, that whereas the polytheists saw a multitude of conflicting wills behind phenomena, the mono-Yahwists saw but one—the righteous will of Almighty Yahweh.

If further proof is needed, three considerations may be adduced. In the first place, although the Babylonian creation-stories are as frankly polytheistic as the Hebrew account is monotheistic, yet the same conception of nature underlies both. In each case we begin with an indefinite undifferentiated continuum or watery waste. ‘The earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep’ (Gen. i 2).

When aloft Heaven existed not,
 When earth below had yet no being;
 But eldest Ocean, the Sower of them (i. e. of the gods)
 And the dark (?) Deep, who was to bear them all,

The waters of these mingled in union, and
No fields were embanked, no islands (*or* marshes) were
seen.¹

There is also the same idea of a habitation created in the midst of the waters by a process of separation. 'And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters"' (Gen. i 6). So also in the Babylonian account the victorious Marduk took the body of Tiamat, the great watery deep, and

Split her open like a flat fish into two halves ;
One half of her he established as a covering for heaven
He fixed a bolt, he stationed a watchman,
He commanded them not to let her waters come forth.
He passed through the heavens, he considered its regions,
And over against the Deep, he placed the dwelling of
Nudimmud,
And the Lord measured the construction of the Deep.
And he founded E-sharra, a mansion like unto it.
The mansion E-sharra which he built like heaven,
He caused Anu, Bel and Ea to inhabit in their districts.²

The order of creation is much the same in both ; and just as the divine command is issued in Genesis, so in the Babylonian stories Marduk bargains with the gods that if he is successful against Tiamat, all power and authority should be transferred to his word of command.

With my word, in your stead, will I decree destiny—
That which I do shall remain unchanged,
It shall not be changed, it shall not fail, the word of my
lips.³

In Tablet III the gods are assembled in the midst of a feast to declare Marduk's honours :

O Marduk, thou art most honoured among the great gods,
Thy destiny is beyond compare, thy command is Anu
In all time thy command shall not be changed,
To exalt and to abase lie in thy hand.
Established shall be the word of thy mouth, resistless thy
command.

¹ Tablet i 1-6, from Ball, *Light from the East*, p. 2 ; cf. also the other Babylonian account on pp. 18 and 19.

² Tablet iv, 137-46. Rogers, *Religion of Babylonia*, p. 126.

³ Tablet ii, 133-40. Rogers, p. 116.

None among the gods shall transgress thy limits.
 Abundance is the desire of the shrines of the gods,
 In their place shall thy sanctuary be established.
 O Marduk, thou art our avenger.
 We give thee lordship over the whole world,
 Thou shalt take thy seat in the assembly, thy word shall
 be exalted.¹

How Marduk exercises this power of command is seen in the fifth Tablet :

The moon-god he caused to shine forth, to him confided the
 night.
 He appointed him a being of the night, to determine the
 days ;
 Every month, without ceasing, like a crown he made him,
saying,
 At the beginning of the month, when thou shinest on the
 land
 Thou shalt show the horns, to determine six days,
 And on the seventh day thou shalt divide the crown in two.
 On the fourteenth day, thou shalt reach the half. . . .²

The Hebrew account is monotheistic and the Babylonian is polytheistic ; again, the Hebrew account in its sobriety, its restraint, and its reverence is immeasurably superior to the Babylonian tablets ; and yet they both reflect that primitive naïve view of the world and of causation which formed the foundation of all the old polytheisms. Whatever may be the exact literary relation of these stories, it would seem that the mono-Yahwists, accepting the stock of natural science common to their day, wrote it up, as it were, in the light of their own belief in Yahweh and brought it into relation to their doctrine of His sole supreme sovereignty. It was not then a different and truer conception of things natural which suggested to them that there is but one God ; they were already firmly convinced of this when they came to look out upon nature, and they reviewed nature in the light of it.

In the second place, when the mono-Yahwists speak of Yahweh's actions, they give no indication that they

¹ Tablet iv 5-15. Rogers, pp. 120 f.

² Tablet v 12-18. Rogers, p. 128.

conceive of Yahweh as acting on nature in a way any less immediate than that in which the polytheists imagined that their gods acted. For instance, Hosea complains that Israel supposed it was the Baalim who gave her bread, water, wool, flax, oil, and drink. 'For she did not know that I gave her the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and multiplied unto her silver and gold' (Hos. ii 5, 8). Hosea can apply to Yahweh's actions the same terms as those applied by the polytheists to the actions of their gods; so far as causation, or the mode in which the will of the God accomplishes its effects, is concerned, Hosea has apparently no correction to make; his point is that it was not the Baalim but Yahweh who is responsible for the results in question. It is evident, again, that the same conception of causation underlies the words of both Rabshakeh and Isaiah; the great difference is that where Rabshakeh says that Yahweh will not or cannot deliver Jerusalem, Isaiah says Yahweh can and will do so.¹

How exactly the Biblical conception of the divine mode of action tallies with that of other Semitic races may be clearly seen from the following passages from the inscription on the 'Moabite Stone', an inscription written by Mesha, a king of Moab in the ninth century B. C.

'And I made this high place for Chemosh in Q R H H, a high place of salvation, because he had saved me from all the kings (?) and because he had let me see my pleasure on all them that hated me. Omri was king over Israel, and he afflicted Moab for many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. . . . And Omri took possession of the land of Mēhēdeba, and it (i.e. Israel) dwelt therein, during his days, and half his son's days, forty years; but (resto)red it Chemosh in my days. . . . And Chemosh said unto me, Go, take Nebo against Israel. And I went by night, and fought against it from the break of dawn till noon—and I took it and slew the whole of it . . . for I had devoted it to Ashtor-Chemosh. And I took thence the vessels of Yahweh, and I dragged them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel had built Yahaz, and abode in it, while he fought against me. But Chemosh drave him out from before me. . . .

¹ 2 Kings xviii 33-5; xix 11-13, 21-34; cf. also 1 Kings xviii 24-8; xx 23, 28; Isa. xxviii 23-9; Jer. xxii 8, 9; xl 2, 3.

Chemosh said unto me, Go down, fight against Horonen. And I went down . . . (and) Chemosh (resto)red it in my days.' ¹

If one substitutes 'Yahweh' for 'Chemosh' and interchanges 'Moab' and 'Israel', the passage reads as though it had been taken from one of the historical books of the Old Testament, with the one exception of the reference to Nebo. Chemosh does for Moab all that Yahweh is said to do for Israel. He saved Mesha from the kings, drove out his enemies and restored to him what before had been lost. And when Israel afflicted Moab, it was because Chemosh was angry with his land.

Finally, Yahweh's will is revealed to His people by the same direct methods as those which the polytheistic gods were supposed to employ. It is true that all kinds of magic, including soothsaying, necromancy, divination, and sorcery, are condemned by the mono-Yahwists. But this condemnation is pronounced, not because these modes of inquiry are useless, but because they involve dealing with and trusting to spirits and powers other than Yahweh the national God. Hence they are disloyal and underhand.² On the other hand, the use of the sacred lot, the Urim and the Thummim, and a trial by ordeal are enjoined by the priest's code as modes in which Yahweh reveals His will.³ The chief method of Yahweh's revelation, however, is that of prophecy. Yahweh was believed by the mono-Yahwists to communicate directly to the prophets the messages which He wished to be conveyed to His people.⁴

If polytheism freed its devotees from many worries and anxieties as to the future, mono-Yahwism was a far more reassuring form of belief. For it implied that the God who is especially interested in and united to Israel is all-powerful; that He watches over everything which affects His people's

¹ Lines 3-5, 7 b-9 a, 14-19, 32, 33; Driver, *Notes on Hebrew Text of Samuel*, p. lxxxvii f.

² Isa. ii 6; viii 19, 20; Jer. xxvii 9, 10; Exod. xxii 18; Deut. xviii 10, 11; Lev. xix 31; xx 6, 7; and cf. Whitehouse in *H. D. B.* iii s.v. 'Magic'.

³ Exod. xxviii 30; Lev. viii 8; Num. xxvii 21; cf. Deut. xxxiii 8, and for the ordeal Num. v 11-31.

⁴ See below, pp. 139-148.

welfare with the closest scrutiny ; and that He is ever ready to intervene on their behalf if only they will turn and repent. Between Him and His people there is constant communication. The way in which His worship should be conducted may be learned from His priests (Mal. ii 7 ; Hag. ii 11), through whom also Yahweh's decision in any judicial matter of special difficulty may be learned.¹ The future is dark and uncertain only if communication with Yahweh be cut off (Amos viii 11, 12).

One may, then, with complete confidence reject the hypothesis that mono-Yahwism was the product of a process of observation and reasoning similar in kind to that which led to philosophical monotheism. So far as nature and causation, so far as the divine methods of operation upon the world are concerned, so far the mono-Yahwists are entirely within the polytheistic stage of culture. Their differentia is not a truer insight into the secrets of nature, nor a more advanced conception of causation, but lies in their knowledge of the power and character of a certain Personal Being known as Yahweh. They claim that Yahweh's will is the sole cause of all that takes place, while the polytheists maintained that other and even more powerful wills than Yahweh's affected the course of events.

III

If mono-Yahwism is not an induction based on the facts of nature, can it be the outcome of a study of contemporary political history ?

Of course, to us who look back upon the history of the Hebrews and see the part which they played in the general scheme of religious evolution, it requires no great reasoning power to infer that the Jews had a special mission from Almighty God. But the prophets could not see things as we do through the lapse of centuries ; and if we would understand them aright, we must try to put ourselves into the intellectual atmosphere in which they lived. The real question is, could any one begin with the current spontaneous

¹ Deut. i 17 ; xvii 9-12 ; xix 17-19 ; xxi 5.

conception of Yahweh as a local national Deity, pledged to the support of His people, and from this argue, by reflection on historical events, to the idea that Yahweh was indeed the only God of the whole earth? According to the instinctive belief of the Semitic world, the power of a god is to be measured by the material and political welfare of his people. If the Israelites had conquered the whole world, they would have concluded in accordance with the strictest logic that Yahweh was supreme among gods. But when we have regard to the actual facts of Israel's history, it must be seen that it was not possible to develop such a conclusion out of the premisses by any logical process. Thought which sets out from the fundamental ideas of deity then current to view the history of Israel must return back always to the same conclusion, that other gods are more powerful than Yahweh; it is locked in a circle from which only a violent logical fallacy could enable a thinker to escape. Logic, in so far as the men of that day consciously recognized it, was undoubtedly on the side of the popular party and against the prophets. The prophets do indeed find evidences of Yahweh's might in history; but that is because they set out to view history with the idea already firmly fixed in their minds that Yahweh is the only Divine Being—an idea which history itself could not give them; and when they approach history in this frame of mind, it is only to be expected that they should occasionally emphasize such facts as appeared to be evidence of Yahweh's power.

This position may be supported by an examination of the purposes for which the history of the past is called to mind and the inferences drawn from it. The Hebrews were interested in the past and refer to it frequently. The mono-Yahwists are never weary of recounting the great deeds of Yahweh as an act of praise and thanksgiving;¹ or they draw a contrast between Yahweh's mercy and repeated forbearance and Israel's ingratitude and disobedience;² or

¹ Deut. xxvi 5-10; 2 Sam. vii 18-24; Ps. xlv 1-8; lxvi; lxxviii 7-14; cv; cxxxv 1-12; cxxxvi.

² Deut. xxxii 3-19; Judges vi 7-10; Ps. lxxviii; cvi; Amos ii 6-13; Hos. xi 1-5; Jer. ii 1-8; vii 21-6; xi 1-8; Ezek. xvi 1-34.

they recite the past as a basis for an exhortation to obey Yahweh's commands and serve Him alone ;¹ or they complain that Yahweh has punished Israel without sufficient cause ;² or they seek to show that disobedience to what they regard as Yahweh's will has roused His anger and brought punishment ;³ or to show that upright conduct is a good policy bringing a blessing with it ;⁴ or, finally, they point to the past to prove that there is no God but Yahweh.⁵ This last use of the appeal to history is confined to the Deuteronomists ; and since the doctrine of mono-Yahwism was preached at least a century before these passages were written, they can hardly be cited as proof that the study of history was the source of mono-Yahwism. Moreover, the writer plainly assumes the truth of mono-Yahwism before he begins his argument.

Special mention must be made of the Second Isaiah, the only prophet who attempts an argumentative proof of the sole Deity of Yahweh. This writer has two lines of thought on the subject ; the one is a contrast between Yahweh and the man-made idols of other races.⁶ The other is an argument from the fulfilment of prophecy ; the idols are challenged to prove that they can foretell the future,⁷ as Yahweh has constantly done ;⁸ for the course of contemporary history has long ago been foretold by Yahweh.⁹

With regard to the first of these, the very existence itself of such an argument requires an explanation ; if one knew why the prophet differentiates Yahweh from all other gods as the one who cannot be identified or associated with any work of men's hands, one would know the secret of the source of mono-Yahwism. Is it, then, possible that the second argument was the real source of this prophet's doctrine of Yahweh ? Can we think of him as one who has carefully

¹ Deut. xi 1-8 ; xxix 2-9 ; Joshua xxiv 1-18 ; 1 Sam. xii 6-25 ; Mic. vi 1-5.

² Ps. xlv 9-22 ; lxxxix 30-51.

³ Jer. xlv 1-14 ; Ezck. xx 1-20 ; Zech. i 4-6.

⁴ Jer. xxii 15, 16.

⁵ Deut. iv 34-40 ; cf. vii 6-9.

⁶ Isa. xl 18-26 ; xlv 9-20 ; xlv 5-7 ; cf. Ps. cxv and cxxxv ; Jer. x 1-11 ; Hab. ii 18-20.

⁷ xli 21-4 ; xliii 9 ; xlviii 14.

⁸ xli 25-9 ; xlii 9 ; xliii 12, &c.

⁹ xlviii 3-8, 15-16 ; xlv 8-13, &c.

collected and pored over the prophecies of the past, comparing them with subsequent events and finding that they tally together so exactly and so amazingly, that he cannot but burst forth in this most magnificent display of courageous faith in Yahweh's sovereignty? When one reflects on the repeated conflicts between the mono-Yahwists and the 'false' prophets, each of whom claimed to speak in the name of Yahweh, and the consequent confusion and contradiction which must have prevailed in the mind of the average Israelite regarding prophecies, one can scarcely think that a structure so noble rested on a basis so uncertain. If we ask what fulfilments of prophecy led him to this conviction, he does not tell us, except to refer to the rising power of Cyrus.¹

When Jerusalem fell before the Chaldeans and Judah went into exile, the strict logical conclusion from the polytheistic premisses of the day, was correctly drawn by the non-prophetic party. According to all the common Semitic notions of the relation of a god to his people, Yahweh was proved to have succumbed, to be a broken deity in whom there is no help. The average Israelite said to himself, 'Yahweh seeth us not; Yahweh hath forsaken the earth' (Ezra viii 12); 'Yahweh hath forsaken me. Yahweh hath forgotten me.'² But the clearest case of all is that of Jeremiah's controversy with the last remnant of the people who fled to Egypt for refuge. Jeremiah adduces the recent disasters as a proof that Yahweh was provoked to anger 'in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods' (Jer. xlv 3; cf. 21-3); and he threatens the refugees in Egypt with even worse punishment if they persist in following the same course (ib. vv. 7-14, 24-30). And if one starts from the premiss that Yahweh is the Almighty Sovereign who alone has given the Chaldeans their victory, this conclusion is strictly correct. But it was just this premiss which the refugees did not admit. Starting from the common assumption that Yahweh is merely an average Semitic deity who had no power to resist the onset of the Chaldean gods,

¹ xli 25, 26; xlv 11; xlviii 14-16.

² Isa. xlix 14; cf. xl 27; xlix 4; li 1; Zeph. i 12; cf. Mal. iii 14; Judges vi 13.

even if He had had the will, they find themselves confirmed in this assumption by the course of history. ' We will certainly perform every word that is gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem ; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine ' (Jer. xlv 17, 18). It is evident that the course of historical events has led these people to think that the deities under whom the Chaldeans had prospered could not safely be neglected.

It could not then have been a careful examination of historical facts which made Jeremiah a mono-Yahwist ; he is already a mono-Yahwist when he begins to argue from history ; and those who were not already mono-Yahwists found the verdict of history to be dead against that doctrine.

That the verdict of history was frequently quoted against mono-Yahwism, the prophets themselves know well. Thus Isaiah depicts the Assyrian as arguing from his past successes that none can resist him and that it is his own strength and not Yahweh's charge which has gotten him the victory (Isa. x 5-13). Rabshakeh understood well with what force his appeal to the facts of history would come home to Hezekiah and to the Israelites on the walls of Jerusalem. ' Who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand ? ' (Isa. xxxvi 20 ; cf. 4-20 ; xxxvii 10-13). That the misfortunes of Israel will be cited by the heathen against Yahweh is a consideration which the Hebrews sometimes urge in their prayers for deliverance. ' Wherefore should the heathen say, where is now their God ? ' (Ps. lxxix 10 ; Joel ii 17).

And this consciousness that the verdict of historical facts is not yet clearly in their favour reappears in the fact that they are continually pleading for, or predicting the advent of, a time when, by the wonderful works which He will

perform, Yahweh will prove Himself in the eyes of all nations to be the sole Supreme God. ' Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples ; but Yahweh shall arise upon thee ; and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising ' (Isa. lx 1-3). As Israel's overthrow in the past was a profanation of Yahweh's name, so its restoration in the future will be a proof to all mankind that Yahweh alone is God. ' I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries : according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they came unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned my holy name : in that men said of them, These are the people of Yahweh and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, whither they went. . . . And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them ; and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, saith the Lord Yahweh, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.' ¹ In the light of this evidence, then, one may with confidence dismiss the idea that mono-Yahwism is a product of the study of the history of Israel.

It is sometimes suggested that the prophets began from the assumption that Yahweh was a righteous God ; and in the light of this belief, the misfortunes of His people indicated to them that He was in reality punishing them for their evil doings. Thus they came to see His omnipotence through the nations whom He raised against them. This line of argument raises another question which must be left over for the present :—How did the prophets come to know that

¹ Ezek. xxxvi 19-24 ; cf. xx 41-4 ; xxviii 25, 26 ; xxxviii 23 ; xxxix 6, 7, 25-9 ; Jer. xvi 19-21 ; Zeph. ii 10-13 ; iii 16-20 ; Zech. xiv 12-21 ; Isa. xlv 14-17 ; lii 9, 10 ; lv 4, 5 ; lx 4-14 ; lxi 9 ; lxvi 18-23 ; Ps. xlv 22-6, &c. &c.

Yahweh was a righteous God ? Was this latter belief the outcome of reasoning and reflection ?

Without going into these questions, one may point out here that belief in the moral character of Yahweh would not logically lead to belief in His omnipotence. It would merely show that it was necessary to win His favour and assistance by different methods from those which appealed to foreign deities. Misfortune would not prove Yahweh's omnipotence or the non-existence of other gods, but merely that He was for the time being disaffected by the moral sins of His people and needed to be propitiated by true repentance.

IV

If it be true that mono-Yahwism is not the result of a product of reasoning, can it be explained as the result of a gradual process of development ? There is, no doubt, a development of the doctrine ; at least we see some of the later prophets making use of the language of the earlier, and the monotheistic idea is more explicitly formulated in the second Isaiah than in the work of the J E writers, though the development seems to be more one in external statement than in essential meaning.¹ But, however much development may be traceable, it must be observed that mono-Yahwism cannot be explained as a normal development resulting from the interplay of the intellectual forces dominating the age. Like organisms, ideas and doctrines undoubtedly do develop from the simple to the complex and from the indefinite to the definite. But if an idea is to develop by the operation of successive intellects, it must, like an organism, have a suitable environment. It must have a congenial atmosphere, it must be before men's minds as a living reality, and the changing circumstances of advancing years must tend to throw fresh light upon it. But if at any time new intellectual forces and conceptions come into being which make the original idea appear to be without any corresponding objective reality, and consequently to be devoid of practical utility, then that idea

¹ Cf. the Introduction to Harper's *Amos and Hosea*.

ceases to develop. For instance, the gradual unfolding of the implications of the Christian idea of the Personality of Christ, as new intellectual forces came into contact with it, can be traced. But if at any time those forces had been such as to make Christianity appear incredible, there would have been no further development.

Now, ever since the rise of that new conception of the universe which resulted from the discovery of the continuity of natural causation, the doctrine that there is but one God has continued to flourish in a thoroughly congenial atmosphere. But when we go back to the age of the Hebrew prophets, we find ourselves in an intellectual environment as congenial to polytheism as it is hostile to monotheism. It would scarcely be going too far to say that monotheism was as impossible in those days as the ancient polytheism is to-day; certainly there was nothing in the intellectual furnishings of that age to make the idea that there is but one God more credible than the idea that there is more than one. It is impossible, therefore, to explain mono-Yahwism as a development brought on by the operation of the intellectual forces which dominated the age. Intellectual forces do not exist outside the minds of men, and the minds of men were against this doctrine. Had there been nothing else behind it, those forces would have killed mono-Yahwism, if by any chance they ever allowed it to make a serious claim to objective reality.

It may perhaps be said that the idea of Yahweh's omnipotence originated with Moses, and that, though there has been a process of development, the prophets owe their doctrine to him. But even if it be admitted that Moses is to be classed as a monotheist rather than as a henotheist, this by no means solves the problem. It is still necessary to ask, whence did Moses derive the doctrine and his conviction of its truth? And if it is improbable that the prophets based their teaching on a reasoned argument, it is still less likely that Moses did so; for the prophets would surely have been in a position of great advantage as compared with Moses, both because they would have inherited whatever learning had come from Moses, and also because they were in a

position to look back upon the long course of Israel's history and in it study the purposes and character of the national God.

And after all, the important question is not, whence did Moses or the prophets derive the idea of Yahweh's omnipotence? but rather, what was it which gave this idea such compelling force and dominating power in the consciousness of Moses and the prophets? The bare abstract idea of one supreme God was not unknown among the polytheists, as has been seen above. Moses and the prophets might well have heard of such a conception either in Egypt or from Babylonian sources. But the real problem is not the origin of the conception, but the condition which gave the monotheistic idea such power in the minds of the mono-Yahwists, at the time when to every one else it was but a vain and idle dream. The mono-Yahwists were continually suggesting the idea to the other Israelites. Why do their minds remain so unbelieving and their souls so cold while the prophets are set on fire by this idea? Why is it that what is the only reality and the truest truth to the mono-Yahwist is incredible to every one else?

And for this reason it is not enough to say that the prophets themselves borrowed the idea one from the other; we may borrow ideas from each other, but we cannot borrow convictions. The fact is that, however much they may have used each other's ideas and expressions, yet in respect of conviction they stand apart and independent of each other. They stand behind each other in the form of a chain, it is true; but it is not a chain of iron in which each link is dependent on those above it; it is a chain of mountains in which each lofty peak stands on a basis of its own. Or, to vary the metaphor, the inherited assumptions, the modes of thinking, and the logic of their day, formed a vast tide of thought which was sweeping on with one consent in the direction of polytheism. But the mono-Yahwists all advance in the very opposite direction. Yet they are not organized together like the crew of a boat; they are rather like swimmers, each one of whom must provide for himself his own means of advance against the stream.

CHAPTER IV

YAHWEH, THE RIGHTEOUS GOD

BEFORE one can profitably discuss the cause of the ethical element in mono-Yahwism, it is necessary to understand the relation in which this doctrine stands to the theological conceptions which were current in the ancient Semitic world. One must endeavour to see how much of the popular stock of ideas was shared by the prophets, and how much of their teaching represents an advance upon, or a rejection of, the ancient Semitic theology. That which the prophets hold in common with the people may be accounted for by causes which operated on a large scale in the ancient world ; that which is peculiar to them must be assigned to causes which were felt by the prophets alone. When this 'differentia', as it may be called, of the prophetic doctrine has been determined, it will be possible to discuss the causes to which it should be assigned. But before proceeding to these inquiries, a distinction must be pointed out for the sake of clearness.

In speaking of 'morals' one is liable to fall into confusion of thought unless three different things are clearly distinguished. (a) 'Morals' might be understood to mean an ethical ideal based upon a consideration of the true end and purpose of human life. (b) Morals may also be understood to mean those 'work-a-day' rules of conduct which are not the expression of an ideal, but are set up by public opinion ; those customary and usual modes of acting between man and man which the community in general expects all its members to live up to, and the violation or observance of which calls down the blame or praise of the general public.

There is a very wide difference between philosophical ethics and the moral requirements of public opinion. The

moral philosopher first adopts some theory as to the supreme 'good' of man, and then judges all action according as it does, or does not, conduce to the realization of this end. He has a consistent principle in the light of which he characterizes as right or wrong all the actions and tendencies of man's life. But the work-a-day rules of conduct which are founded upon public opinion are much more limited in their scope. They are not based upon a consideration of the whole nature of man and his self-development; they are concerned chiefly with what is just between man and man and the duty of the individual to the community. They represent no ideal, but rather a minimum of right conduct, that below which a man cannot fall without incurring censure. In ordinary morals 'righteousness' covers very much the same ground as our modern term 'justice', that which ought to be between man and man; whereas in philosophical ethics 'justice' is but one department of morality, and 'righteousness' is a wider term covering the whole field of right and wrong.

(c) In the third place, 'morals' may be understood to mean not these work-a-day rules of conduct, but the acts themselves which a man performs in daily life. The individual may or may not live up to the standard of morality which public opinion sets before him; if he observes it carefully, we call his morals good; and if he fails to observe it, we call his morals bad.

It will be seen below that the differentia of the prophets does not consist in a clearer insight into the theoretical principles of conduct; as a matter of fact they accept the standard of work-a-day morality current in Israel in their day as sufficient; but they are distinguished by the vehemence with which and the grounds upon which they urge their countrymen to bring their lives into closer conformity with this popularly recognized standard. And the grounds on which they urge a practical reformation of morals is simply this, that Yahweh, the God of Israel, is a Righteous God, who demands from His people, as the first condition of His favour, uprightness of moral conduct. The differentia of the ethical teaching of the prophets will be found to

consist, in the last analysis, in their conviction concerning the moral character of a certain divine Person whom they know as 'Yahweh'.

II

But as a preliminary to this discussion, one must first examine the basis of morals in the ancient world in general, and also the support or sanction given to morality by other ancient religions. There is no race of men known which does not approve of some actions as being right, and disapprove of others as being wrong.¹ It is difficult to see how any society, however primitive, can hold together, unless its members agree to avoid certain kinds of actions and disapprove of any one who does them. If a man's life and property are never secure from his next-door neighbour, the possibility of living in a community is reduced to a minimum. Actions which are destructive of tribal life must be censured. Not that every moral distinction was consciously based on a reason of this kind. Men have likes and dislikes, preferences and aversions, and they praise or blame conduct as right or wrong according to the way in which it stirs their feelings.² And since human nature is much the same the whole world over, and is characterized by the same kind of instinctive feelings, pretty much the same kind of thing was praised or blamed among all nations.

But these instinctive feelings, which may be said to constitute the moral sensitiveness of a community, were not the only factor which determined the concrete moral codes current in the ancient world. Another factor played an important part. The moral code of a pastoral community is necessarily simpler and shorter than that of an agricultural community; and this latter, again, is necessarily less complicated than that of a commercial people. As society advances from a lower to a higher stage, population becomes more dense, men's lives touch each other at a larger number of points, and so their relations towards each other become

¹ Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, i 31. Westermarck, *Development of the Moral Ideas*, i 129, 130.

² See Hobhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16; Westermarck, *op. cit.*, i cc. 1-3.

more complicated ; many kinds of action become the necessary accompaniments of daily life, which before were almost impossible owing to lack of opportunity ; and numberless new ways of injuring or benefiting others are opened up. When a community advances from a nomadic to an agricultural stage, the nomads find themselves confronted with many new modes of conduct such as had not been possible before, and so had not yet been distinguished into right and wrong. The culture of the vine, for instance, opens up opportunities for self-indulgence such as are not presented in the nomadic stage. And this is still more true of the advance from an agricultural to a commercial stage. When population becomes concentrated in towns, when the division of labour and the organization of industry make men dependent upon others whom they never meet face to face, it is clear that the relations between man and man are not only much more complex but also more abstract, that is to say, they become more official and less personal, more mechanical and less human. Under these conditions, injury to others is freed from the restraint of personal acquaintance.

Again, a commercial stage of civilization implies the growth of a capitalist class, of a class of men who are in a position of economic advantage, and upon whom large numbers of others must become dependent in one way or another. It is obvious that under such conditions as these, countless new ways of acting towards others are opened up for the first time. And as a community enters upon these new conditions, its moral sensitiveness must do its work in classifying these new actions into right and wrong. Not that the community sets itself to work to do this formally and consciously. It is done out of sight, as it were ; there is a period during which public opinion is slowly crystallizing in accordance with the moral feelings of individuals and during which certain customary modes of acting between man and man are being established ; and what is customary represents the standard of what ought to be.

From this it may be seen that the success of any com-

munity is dependent upon its morality, in two ways. It will depend first upon the way in which the classification is carried out—it must tend towards the preservation of society ; and secondly, upon the extent to which individuals live up to the standard of conduct thus established. If the moral sense of any people is so perverted that it praises actions which tend directly to the destruction of society, that people is doomed ; if again the mass of the individuals do not exercise sufficient self-control and self-restraint to live near to the limits of what is called right, the result is equally disastrous. Each advance in civilization is a challenge to the moral sensitiveness of the community and a call to greater self-restraint and self-control in the presence of new opportunities for indulgence. The truth of this is strikingly illustrated whenever a primitive race is brought into contact with an advanced modern civilization. Unless the savage is carefully protected from them, he and his race fall victims to the opportunities of self-indulgence which the higher civilization brings with it—opportunities towards which all but a small percentage of the higher race have learned to maintain an attitude of self-restraint.

Now the moral codes of ancient Israel do not appear to be so different from those of other people as to warrant by themselves the conclusion that they are not the outcome of much the same set of causes as those which operated elsewhere. The Decalogues of Exod. xxxiv 12–26 and Exod. xx as well as the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx 22–xxiii 33) are to be understood as a codification of what it was customary to do in Israel. The Book of the Covenant is plainly adapted to the conditions of an agricultural community, while the later legislation of Deuteronomy and the Priests' Code presupposes a more advanced civilization.

III

It is of importance to observe that these standards of right and wrong current in ancient Israel and generally acknowledged by all were accepted as adequate by the mono-Yahwists. The prophets are not aiming at a reformation

of theoretical morals; they are not trying to persuade men to recognize a new classification of moral conduct and to call acts right and wrong according as they agree or disagree with a new ethical principle which is now being brought forward for the first time. They are not reformers of moral theories, but of practical morals; they presuppose that men are already able to make a correct classification of acts into right and wrong, and they urge them to bring their conduct in daily life into conformity with what every one knows to be right. 'Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well' (Isa. i 16). 'Seek good and not evil,' says Amos, 'hate the evil and love the good' (Amos v 14, 15; cf. Mic. ii 2). It is only depravity and perversity that can pretend to be unaware of these elementary distinctions. 'Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter' (Isa. v 20). It is not ignorance which the prophets inveigh against, but the moral depravity of men who know or are quite able to find out the right course, but who nevertheless prefer to do the wrong and salve their consciences as best they can. One cannot find any deep line of cleavage between the moral standard of the prophets and that of the nation at large. The prophets are content with the standard of work-a-day morals approved by the general public opinion in Israel; but they are dissatisfied with the way in which men live up to that standard.¹

The offences which they most often charge against their countrymen are such as the common conscience of mankind condemns. They protest against murder,² theft,³ adultery,⁴ the use of false measures,⁵ drunkenness,⁶ greed,⁷ perjury,⁸

¹ Cf. Harper, *Amos and Hosea*, p. cxxii f.

² Isa. i 21; Mic. iii 10; Hos. iv 2; vi 9; Jer. vii 6, 9; xxii 17; xix 4; Ezek. ix 9; xi 6, 7; xxii 6, 9, 25, &c.

³ Isa. i 23; Hos. iv 2; Amos iii 10; Jer. vii 9; Zech. v 3, 4.

⁴ Hos. iv 2, 13, 14; vii 4; Jer. ix 2; xxiii 10, 14; xxix 23; Ezek. xxxiii 26; Mal. iii 5.

⁵ Mic. vi 10, 11; Hos. xii 7; Amos viii 5.

⁶ Isa. v 11, 22; xxviii 1, 3, 7; Hos. iv 11; vii 5; Mic. ii 11.

⁷ Isa. v 8; Mic. ii 2.

⁸ Jer. vii 9; Zech. v 3, 4; Mal. iii 5.

incest,¹ lying,² and breaking faith.³ But by far the most frequent and emphatic protests are directed against oppression, cruelty, and injustice to the poor and unprotected, the widows, orphans, and strangers.⁴

Let us try to understand the causes of the moral decline which these last charges indicate. There can be no doubt that the moral life of the nation had in the days of the great mono-Yahwists become polluted by a wholesale oppression of the poor and prostitution of justice in the interests of the rich such as was not known before. And this, again, reacted on the private life of the individual and brought about a still further deterioration of conduct in many other directions. It was not that the moral sense of the nation did not know these things to be wrong, but that certain changes in the economic condition of the country brought with it opportunities for self-indulgence in what was recognized as wrong, and there was not sufficient moral stamina to resist. It is worth while to examine these economic changes for the light which they throw upon the ethical teaching of the prophets.

In the early days of the Kingdom, especially in the times of David, when the nation was composed almost entirely of farmers, men were more or less upon a footing of equality. As a general rule, no one man or class of men was so much more powerful than others that he could set at defiance all the recognized principles of justice and habitually violate the customary modes of acting. Each party to a dispute, unless one of them happened to be a widow, a stranger, or an orphan, could see to it that he was not obviously cheated by the judge. One can hardly think that oppression and injustice were entirely unknown, but there was no opportunity to practise them upon a large scale. Men stood upon much the same level of power and wealth, and when

¹ Amos ii 7.

² Jer. ix 3-6; xxiii 14; Hos. vii 3; Mic. vi 12; Zeph. iii 13.

³ Hos. iv 2; x 13; Jer. xxxiv 8 ff.; cf. also Ezekiel's definition of a just man, xviii 1-18; xxxiii 15.

⁴ Isa. i 23; iii 14, 15; v 23; Amos iv 1; v 11, 12; vi 12; Mic. ii 2, 8, 9; iii 2, 3; vii 3; Jer. v 28; vii 5, 6; xxii 13, 17, &c.

warfare or a failure of the crops impoverished the nation, the loss fell upon all alike, leaving the balance of power within the nation practically undisturbed. This period was looked back upon by the prophets as ideal. 'I will turn mine hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross and will take away all thine alloy (R.V. margin): and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning' (Isa. i 25, 26; cf. 21).

But in the days of Amos and Hosea, the Kingdom of Israel, and that of Judah in the time of Isaiah and Micah, had just undergone the transition from an agricultural to a commercial condition. Trade with foreign countries was carried on; towns had sprung up; local markets and centres of distribution were established and opportunities were found for the rapid and easy exchange of many varied products. The result was the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few; the rich became much richer and the poor became poorer. A class of capitalists arose whose command of a surplus of wealth placed them in a position of great economic advantage. When warfare or drought had devastated the farms of the poor, they were obliged to borrow from the rich. The old balance of power between man and man was upset, and the common people were placed at the mercy of the capitalists and landowners. And the rich did not fail to take advantage of their opportunities to the utmost. Regardless alike of the miserable lot of their debtors and of the economic consequences of such a course, they insisted upon draining away the very last resources of their debtors. Amos describes how the nobles live in fine mansions and fare sumptuously every day, reclining on couches of ivory and cushions of silk (Amos iii 12, vi 4-6). And these are the men who 'have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; that pant after the dust of the earth on the heads of the poor . . . and lay themselves, down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge' (ii 6-8). They are merciless to any one in their power, making an unscrupulous use of their opportunities to get all they can for themselves. They 'swallow up the needy, and cause the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the

new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat ? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit ; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat ' (viii 4-6). In Judah, there is the same lack of self-restraint. The heads of Jacob ' pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones ; who also eat the flesh of my people ; and they flay their skin from off them, and break their bones ; yea, they chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron ' (Mic. iii 2, 3).

Moreover, when the community was thus sharply divided into two classes, the administration of justice was no longer secure. A powerful litigant might feel confident of having his case decided without any unfairness against himself ; but the poor, the needy, and especially widows and all who were unprotected, were in a position of very great disadvantage. It must have required a judge of iron will and impeccable uprightness to run the risks involved in deciding in favour of a nobody to the injury of a powerful noble. And once the judiciary was known to be corrupt, the lot of the poor would become worse and worse. The rich would have no need to use violence in their depredations ; to obtain a favourable decision in a law court would not only be much easier, but would also throw a cloak of apparent justice and regularity over all such proceedings.

The advance in civilization which both kingdoms made about this time brought a new power and new opportunities to the wealthier classes. And the welfare of the nation called imperatively for the exercise of self-restraint on the part of those to whom these new opportunities for gain and self-indulgence were thus presented. But they seem to have given free rein to their worst passions of greed and avarice. Not only did they exact the last farthing from the poor man's purse and strip him of his very clothing, but they also bribed the judges and used the law courts as instruments of unlawful gain. Accordingly, the prophets are full of complaint against the cruel injustice done to the poor, the widow and the orphan ; ' woe unto them,' says Isaiah,

‘ that decree unrighteousness, and to the writers that write perverseness ; to turn aside the needy from judgement, and to take away the right of the poor of my people, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey ’ (Isa. x 1, 2). ‘ I know how manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins ; ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right ’ (Amos v 12). ‘ Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor judgement and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money ’ (Mic. iii 10, 11).

It is not unlikely that the new economic conditions and the greatly extended power over their fellows, which the rich now found themselves to possess, had a tendency to engender in their minds the impression that they and their compeers were made of other clay than the worthless and helpless peasantry ; and that it was not to be expected that they should treat the lower classes with the same respect or consideration which they extended to their equals. In fact, there would naturally arise a tendency to set up a double code of morals, one of which applied to dealings with men of one’s own class, and the other to dealings with the wretched *canaille*, who had no right to expect justice and consideration, and only existed to be exploited in the interests of the capitalists and aristocrats.¹ The upper classes may have endeavoured to justify their conduct to themselves in some such way as this. And as against them, the prophets do, no doubt, urge a truer and higher standard of morals ; but this is obviously due to abnormal moral depravity in the rich ; it is surely impossible to think that such practices as these would not have been condemned by the moral sense of the nation at large. The mono-Yahwists were not unfair in presupposing that those whom they condemn might have known better, if they had been willing to do so. The upper classes had failed to rise to the new

¹ Cf. Hobhouse, *op. cit.* i 23 ff.

morality which the advance in civilization called for ; they had allowed a selfish indulgence in the new opportunities to darken their moral judgement and to ruin the country.

But if this is a fair representation of the moral condition of the nation, it is not necessary to assume a very deep insight into the theory of morals on the part of those who protested against it. The differentia of the ethical teaching of the mono-Yahwists clearly did not lie in a truer knowledge of moral principles such as would lead them to condemn conduct between man and man of which the moral sense of the nation approved. What is peculiar to them is the vehemence of their protest against the violation of the commonly accepted standard and the grounds on which they urged obedience to it.

Those grounds were religious, or more properly, theological considerations. But this alone was not by any means unique. Morality was supported to some extent by considerations about the gods in every ancient nation as well as in popular Yahwism. What is peculiar to the mono-Yahwists in the last analysis is the view they take of Yahweh's character ; and it is this view, so different from that held of any other god, which leads them to be so zealous in the cause of morality. It is because they believe that Yahweh is different in moral character from all other gods, that it is necessary for his people to live up to what they know to be right, or in other words, to obey the moral law of Yahweh.

In discussing this position it will be necessary first of all to see in what way the belief about the gods supported morality in ancient religions. It is indeed probable that religion had but little to do with the formation of the popular codes of morals ; but that is a modern view ; the view of the ancient world was quite different. The customary modes of acting between man and man were placed under the protection of a deity. ' Religion was the only sanction which originally existed to enforce a custom or strengthen an institution ; religion impressed these on the people by constituting them into solemn rites binding upon all.'¹

¹ Ramsay, *Hastings' D. B.*, v 136 a.

Accordingly sometimes gods were held up as guardians of morality ;¹ Hammurabi, for instance, claims to have received his code from Shamash the Babylonian god of justice ; and in much the same way, all the legislation of Israel was ascribed to the dictation of Yahweh through Moses. Here we are on ground common to the mono-Yahwists and to the ancient Semitic world in general.

But more than this. It was generally regarded as not impossible that the gods might punish for sin. In the most primitive religions this simply takes the form of a belief that there are certain spirits who are incensed by certain kinds of action without considering their moral character, and who wreak vengeance upon any one who does them. The later polytheism presents us with something better than this. The gods who have any interest in morals, and there are many who have none, are not mere vengeful spirits, acting like savages themselves, but are influenced to some extent by considerations of right and wrong. But it is very easy to overestimate the influence which the ancient gods exercised upon the moral conduct of individuals. What was expected of the god of justice was that he should give a decision in cases of unusual difficulty, and that he should assist in the police work of detecting and punishing the guilty. But none of the gods were absolutely unremitting in the searching out and punishing of offences between man and man. In fact, the everyday behaviour of man to man could not have been very deeply influenced by the thought of punishment from the gods, and for this there were two main reasons. In the first place, the gods were related to the community as a whole, as a unit ; they helped the nation or tribe as a whole, and they required as a condition of their favour and assistance, that the nation, in its corporate capacity, should do its duty towards them. And this meant chiefly the due performance of the ritual and the offering of the proper sacrifices. The gods were not interested in the individuals as such apart from the community. Where they are most concerned with the conduct of individuals

¹ Hobhouse, *op. cit.* ii 74 ; Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 52 ; Westermarck, *op. cit.* ii 732.

is where that conduct is plainly seen either to injure or to benefit the community. Hence the civic virtues of loyalty and patriotism are those which win most approval from the gods.¹

In the second place, although it was regarded as not at all impossible that the gods might punish for almost anything which the moral sense of the community condemned, yet it was by no means certain that they would do so. The commission of an immoral act certainly did not fill the ancients with a subjective sense of unworthiness for the divine presence. There was no feeling that the divine is separated from the human by all the difference between moral perfection and sin ; it was rather the aspect of punishment, the thought of the infliction of suffering by those who had the power to cause it, which was uppermost in men's minds. When disaster or suffering came, some god must be angry with you, and therefore you must have done something to rouse his or her wrath ; but you do not know beforehand what this is. When you injure your neighbour, it is by no means certain that any god will be incensed thereat ; if no misfortune overtakes you, the gods are obviously well disposed and have taken no umbrage ; and even if misfortune does come, it is by no means certain that it was a moral offence against your neighbour which caused the divine anger ; it was more likely to have been some ritual offence against the god himself.²

In order to understand this, it must be recollected that before the rise of the critical spirit among the Greeks, men always ascribed to their gods a character and a type of consciousness which did not differ in kind from those of men. Accordingly, just as men universally offered to the gods that which was dearest to themselves, so they felt that the gods were most likely to be offended by the things which most readily offended men. On this supposition it was quite logical to think that a god would be more readily and more deeply incensed by some failure to pay to him

¹ W. R. Smith, *Religion of Semites*, pp. 265-7.

² Cf. Westermarck, i 234, and Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 229 f.

the respect which was his due, by some neglect or slight in the ritual of his service, than by any conduct of one man toward another. The great difficulty which the men of that day experienced was evidently this—the likes and dislikes of the gods were so indeterminate that it was impossible to single out at once what it was that offended them. You could not tell what kind of thing it was which had lost you the favour of a god, it might be a ritual error, and it might be some unwitting and unwilling mistake in neglecting the conventional methods of doing things, or it might possibly be a wrong done to a fellow man. All you knew was that your misfortunes proved that some god or goddess, you could not tell which, was offended for some reason, you could not tell exactly what. You could not even know that any god was angry with you, until disaster overtook you ; and then your aim must be to find some means to placate him or her, whoever it might be. Accordingly, in the Babylonian religion prayers are addressed to ‘the god or goddess known or unknown’ with a confession of every kind of thing which could conceivably be supposed to offend a deity. Speaking of the incantation tablets, Professor Jastrow says,

‘There is no question of retribution for actual acts of injustice or violence, any more than there is a question of genuine contrition. The enumeration of the causes for the suffering constitutes in fact a part of the incantation. The mention of the real cause in the long list—the list aims to be exhaustive, so that the exorciser may strike the real cause—goes a long way towards ensuring the departure of the evil spirit. . . . Hence, the striking features of these texts, the enumeration of long lists of causes for misfortune, long lists of powers invoked, and a variety of ceremonies prescribed, in the hope that the priest will “hit it” at one time or the other.’¹

The intense anxiety to become reconciled to the gods and freed from the consequences of sin, which is so marked a characteristic of the Babylonian Penitential Psalms, does not spring from any desire for purification with a view

¹ *Religion of Babylonia, &c.*, p. 292 f.

to fellowship with beings who are felt to be of a higher moral character than man; it is due rather to a very natural wish to escape from present suffering or misfortune.

Of this let us take one example from the Babylonian Psalms.

May the wrath of the heart of my God be pacified !
 May the god who is unknown to me be pacified !
 May the goddess who is unknown to me be pacified !
 May the known and unknown god be pacified !
 May the known and unknown goddess be pacified !

.

May the god or goddess known or unknown be pacified !
 May the god who is angry with me be pacified !
 May the goddess who is angry with me be pacified !
 The sin which I have committed I know not.
 The misdeeds which I have committed I know not.

.

Pure food have I not eaten,
 Clear water have I not drunk.
 An offence against my god have I unwittingly committed.
 A transgression against my goddess have I unwittingly done.
 O lord, my sins are many, great are my iniquities
 My god, my sins are many, great are my iniquities !
 My goddess, my sins are many, great are my iniquities !
 Known or unknown god, my sins are many, great are my
 iniquities.

.

The transgression I have done, I know not.
 The lord, in the anger of his heart hath looked upon me.

.

The known or unknown god hath straitened me.
 The known or unknown goddess hath brought affliction
 upon me.

.

How long, known and unknown god, until the anger of the
 heart be pacified ?
 How long, known and unknown goddess, until thy un-
 friendly heart be pacified ?
 Mankind is perverted and has no judgement.
 Of all men who are alive, who knows anything ?
 They do not know whether they do good or evil.

.

Known and unknown god, my sins are seven times seven ;
forgive my sins !

Known and unknown goddess, my sins are seven times
seven, forgive my sins !¹

And it should be noted further, that just as the gods may be offended by actions which are essentially non-moral, so their anger is placated and their favour is won by means which are non-moral. The success of the incantation ritual is said to depend upon 'speaking the right words and pronouncing the right name . . . together with the performance of the correct ceremony and the bringing of the right sacrifice'.² The simplest method was to renounce or repudiate sin in the proper form. In the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*,

'the dead man enumerates all possible sins that occur to the Egyptian mind as likely to anger the gods, and he rejects them in the appropriate language. Whether he was really and truly guilty seems to have been a secondary matter. The point is that he rids himself of them by repudiating them in the appropriate formula.'³

It is certainly no matter for surprise that the gods roused no subjective sense of moral unworthiness ; they were themselves guilty of the same immoralities as men. The moral rules which they were supposed to have laid down are purely arbitrary ; they do not themselves obey these rules in their conduct, nor is it always expected that they will be strictly just in their dealings with men. As Professor Jastrow says :

'The thought whether the deity was justified in exercising wrath did not trouble him. . . . It is not necessary for the deity to be just ; it was sufficient that some god felt himself offended, whether through omission of certain rights or through an error in the performance of rites or what not.'⁴

Again, in many ancient religions, particularly those with which the Hebrews were best acquainted, the gods

¹ Harper, *Literature of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 436-8.

² Jastrow, *op. cit.* p. 292.

³ Hobhouse, *Morals in Evolution*, ii 69.

⁴ *Religion of Babylonia*, p. 314 ; cf. Adam, *Religious Teachers of Greece*, p. 52.

demanding an immoral worship. 'In man's relationship to them (i.e. the gods) the same rules do not apply as in his intercourse with his fellow men. They punish murder and debauchery; yet men, and particularly children, are sacrificed to them; and rites which, but for the sanction of religious tradition, would even then have been condemned as licentious and barbarous, are performed in their honour.'¹ It should be recognized that religion has too often been an obstacle to moral progress, for it is essentially conservative and clings to ancient customs long after the moral sense of the community has outgrown them. When culture reaches a certain stage, the old gods either fall into ridicule or their personal histories have to be excluded from an ideal community of men.

Morality, then, is given in ancient heathenism a religious sanction; but the sanction is almost valueless as a motive to right conduct between man and man, except where the interests of the tribe are at stake. The gods may punish for immorality, but it is by no means certain that they will do so. You may escape altogether. And if disaster, the sign of a god's anger and of the infliction of punishment, should come upon you, you cannot tell whether it is for an act of moral wrongdoing, or for some unwitting mistake in the ceremonial of his worship. And even if it be a moral wrongdoing which has roused the god's ire, you may appease him by the richness of your sacrifices, or you may gain relief by means of an incantation. The gods were no patterns of private morals; they were as corrupt as men, and did not necessarily deal justly either with men or their fellow gods. The reason why the ancient polytheisms gave such feeble support to morals, is chiefly because of the character of the gods, because they do not insist upon right dealing between man and man as an essential condition to their favour. What is wanted is the conviction that there is a God who will never overlook wrongdoing between man and man.²

¹ Tiele, *Elements of the Science of Religion*, i 103 f.

² Cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 64-6.

Now the theology of the average Israelite was plainly of this common Semitic type.¹ He assumed that Yahweh's favour was to be won and retained in much the same way as that of other gods ; Yahweh will not inquire too closely into the moral condition of His people² provided that they do not fail in His ritual or in supplying an abundance of costly sacrifice.. But the prophets come forward with the one thing needful. It is true that they have not a better classification of right and wrong acts than their contemporaries, and they still regard Yahweh as dealing with the nation as a corporate whole rather than with individuals ; but it is also clear that they are convinced that Yahweh will never look favourably upon a nation in which injustice, murder, theft, and lying are rampant, no matter how assiduously the ritual may be practised, or how costly the sacrifices may be. This idea is re-echoed time and again. ' To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith Yahweh ; I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear ; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow ' (Isa. i 11–17). What is peculiar about the prophetic teaching is that the prophets have fixed the character of Yahweh. When misfortune comes, no one can say exactly what it is which has offended other gods ; but the prophets know of a certainty, even before disaster comes, that Yahweh is offended by wrongdoing, particularly by the prostitution of His justice in the interests of the rich. They know that

¹ Cf. cap. ii.

Cf. Ps. x 4–11 ; xiv 1.

He is determined at all costs to have for Himself a people who shall reflect His own righteous character, and that with this ultimate end in view He will, if necessary, even raise up enemies against Israel who shall carry them away into captivity. In one word, social righteousness is a condition essential to obtaining Yahweh's favour; if it is absent, exile and direst disaster await the nation; but if it is present, peace and prosperity. 'Seek ye Yahweh, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour and there be none to quench it in Bethel; ye who turn judgement to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth. . . . For I know how manifold are your transgressions and how mighty are your sins; ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate *from their right*. . . . Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgement in the gate; it may be that Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph. . . . Shall not the day of Yahweh be darkness and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgement roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. . . . Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith Yahweh, whose name is the God of hosts.'

The differentia of the prophetic teaching, then, is this conviction that Yahweh is Himself absolutely righteous and demands of His people that they shall reflect in their dealings with each other a righteousness akin to His own. What is peculiar to the mono-Yahwists alone in the ancient world is a conviction about Yahweh's moral character;

¹ Amos v 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 20-4, 27; cf. Amos iv 4-13; Hos. vi 6; viii 11-13; x 12-15; xii 6; Mic. vi 6-8; Jer. vii 5-9, &c.

and it is this which requires to be explained by causes other than those which operated on the Semitic world in general.¹

It is not the mere presence of this conception in the minds of the prophets which requires explanation, but rather how that conception became a conviction, whence it obtained such force and such reality as to dominate the thought and conduct of these men. The prophets were continually placing the conception before the minds of the people ; but, we must suppose, it appeared to them to have no truth or corresponding reality ; other ideas which appeared more real inhibited it from having its appropriate effect upon conduct. How, then, can one explain the hold which this conception had upon the minds of the prophets ?

IV

In seeking the desired explanation the choice must be made between three things, an instinctive assumption or prejudice, a train of reasoning, and an inward mental experience. That the prophetic conviction was not the result of an instinctive prejudice needs no proof. The prejudices were all in the opposite direction. The universal assumption of the polytheistic world is that the gods are, in mental life and moral character, much the same as men. They have no conception or experience of any type of consciousness or character other than the human, and this they instinctively ascribe, not only to gods, but, in a primitive stage, to other objects as well. The fact that a prejudice of this kind is not easily broken down, serves to show that there must have been in the minds of the mono-Yahwists some very powerful force behind their conception of Yahweh's moral character to enable it to dislodge these instinctive and inherited assumptions and establish itself so firmly in their place.

If the prophetic doctrine of Yahweh's moral character cannot be ascribed to instinctive prejudice, can it be assigned to a quickened intellect and a more acute power of reasoning ? There are two sets of data from which such a conclusion

¹ Cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 65-7 ; G. A. Smith, *Modern Preaching*, &c., p. 140.

might conceivably have been inferred: (a) The course and constitution of things in the natural world. (b) Yahweh's dealings with and relations to his people.

The first of these is to many modern minds the source of their conviction of God's goodness. 'When from the dawn of life we see all things working together toward the evolution of the highest spiritual attributes of Man, we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a moral Being. The everlasting source of phenomena is none other than the infinite Power that makes for righteousness.'¹ If the prophets derived their doctrine in this way, it is obvious that they must first have believed (1) that Yahweh is responsible for all that is, that He is the Creator; and (2) that things in general are bound together in one ordered system, and that the trend of this system is towards righteousness. Now even if one does not stop to ask how they came to believe that Yahweh is the one God and Creator, there still remains the objection that the universe did not appear to be an organic whole to the prophets any more than to any one else in that pre-scientific and uncritical age, and therefore they could scarcely have found evidence of a power or a tendency in the natural world making for righteousness. Hence this cannot be regarded as a satisfactory explanation.

But is it possible that the idea was suggested to the prophets, not from the world as an organic whole, but from the general ordering of the circumstances and surroundings of their own lives? One must point out in reply, that even we in our day, although we are constantly being assured that there is in the general working of things a tendency towards what is good, do not always find it easy to make this doctrine square with the facts of our own lives. And when one recollects the facts of a life such as that of Jeremiah, or Micah, or Hosea, it is difficult to see in them that which, by a process of reflection, could give rise to the belief. And indeed, that this was not the source of the Hebrew doctrine may be clearly seen from the fact that to many of the most deeply religious, as is shown by the Book

¹ Fiske, *Idea of God*, p. 167.

of Job and certain of the Psalms,¹ the adversity of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked furnishes a serious problem.

Is it, then, possible that the doctrine is derived from a consideration of the events of Israel's history, either in the immediate present or the remote past? The view is expressed by Kittel² that the facts of history gave rise to this belief.

'How, so runs the one question, how was what was being accomplished before their eyes *at all possible*? Was not Yahweh Israel's God from of old, who must protect it against all danger? How, then, could God thus deliver His people into the hands of the Assyrians? If, nevertheless, he did this, then either He was no longer Israel's God or Israel was no longer His people. He did it. And since Yahvé's faithfulness and power could not waver, then the logical conclusion of the prophetic preaching was inevitable. Israel is no longer what it was, it is a rebellious nation, the people are degenerate sons who have broken faith with their Lord. It is Israel's *guilt*, it is its sin which its God is avenging by the hand of the enemy. Thus the condition of Israel hitherto, its religious as well as its moral and social condition with its manifold evils, suddenly appears in a new light. It is because of these evils that the all-powerful enemy is allowed to knock at Israel's gates. Ay, and Yahvé Himself thus suddenly appears in a new light; it is He Himself who, in His moral holiness, has decreed Israel's ruin, who has made its enemies its scourge.'

It is often pointed out in answer to an argument of this kind that all the Palestinian states suffered from the same affliction as Israel, and yet nowhere else does the idea arise that the nation is suffering from moral shortcomings. But this answer is inapplicable here, because Kittel assumes that the prophets have already come by the belief that Yahweh is the one almighty Deity whose power cannot fail, and therefore the hypothesis of weakness on Yahweh's part is excluded for them. Moreover, the question is whether we have not after all, in the Hebrew prophets, men who were of more acute intellect than any of their contemporaries in any nation. Kittel argues that the belief in Yahweh's

¹ Cf. Pss. xxxvii, lxxiii and Jer. xii 1, 2.

² *History of the Hebrews*, ii 317 f.

moral holiness came as the solution of the problem, 'How was what was being accomplished before their eyes at all possible?' But the thought of Yahweh's righteousness is not the only solution of this problem. It is certainly quite correct to say that the prophets felt that 'it is Israel's guilt, it is Israel's sin which is being avenged on it'. But one must not forget that the people felt this as well as the prophets, and so, as the Babylonian Penitential Psalms prove, would other Semitic nations as well. The question is, why did the prophets see the disaster as the punishment for moral, and not for ritual or ceremonial sin and guilt? Either would solve the intellectual problem equally well. If the prophets had followed the common Semitic solution, Yahweh would have been to them, in respect of His moral character, what He was to others, a characteristic Semitic deity. Hence, even if one does not stop to ask how the prophets came by the belief in Yahweh's sole Godhead, the whole problem still remains to be solved—why did the prophets single out the moral offences of the people as the causes of Yahweh's aversion?

Moreover, the argument assumes that punishment in the shape of foreign invasion had already been inflicted or was clearly inevitable. But was this the case when Amos and Hosea flourished? The Assyrian conquest was by no means a certainty, so long as the power of Egypt was still unsubdued. Under Jeroboam II the Northern Kingdom was still living in a sense of peace and security; the storm cloud in the north-east was not yet big enough to obscure the brightness of the day.¹ Amos foresees invasion (iii 11) and captivity beyond Damascus (v 27; cf. vi 7-14; vii 17); but it should be noted that he presents them as the consequence of Israel's sin, not as the ground of a problem the answer to which is Yahweh's righteous character; and again, he certainly does not regard them as inevitable, because elsewhere he holds out the prospect that repentance and reformation will secure Yahweh's favour. 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live' (v 5, 6; cf. v 14, 15). Invasion and captivity only become inevitable when it is seen that it is idle to hope for reformation (vii 1-9). Hence it can hardly

¹ Cf. Hos. vii 11; xii 8.

have been the foresight of certain disaster which led the prophets to their special view of Yahweh's moral character.

But the point to be discussed at the moment is whether the prophets were men of unusual intellectual power who reasoned out this doctrine from a study of recent history. One must therefore ask whether any one starting from the common Semitic ideas of the character of deities and considering the condition of Israel during the prophetic age, could come, by a process of logical inference, to the conclusion that the cause of Yahweh's displeasure is to be found in moral transgressions. One should notice what the nature of the argument would have to be. It would be an inductive argument. There is a certain consequent, national disaster. There are an indefinite number of antecedents—all the facts of the national life past and present. In order, then, that out of all this mass of antecedents, the moral faults of the nation should be singled out by an inductive process as the required cause, the history must have fallen into fairly clearly marked periods in which moral transgression and national calamity were present or absent together, or followed very closely upon each other, or at least varied directly with each other. Was this the case in the history of Israel? To some extent it was. The prophets undoubtedly looked back upon the prosperous days of David as a period of national righteousness; and the generations which saw the captivities of the two Kingdoms were especially corrupt. There was much to point in this direction. But it is scarcely necessary to say that there was also much to point in another direction. The Northern Kingdom had never been so corrupt and yet so prosperous as in the days of Jeroboam II. No king had so earnestly endeavoured to serve Yahweh in accordance with the directions of the prophets as Josiah, and yet he met a miserable defeat and death at the hands of Pharaoh Necho. Moreover, both Isaiah and Micah had given the people reason to expect that a glorious period of peace and prosperity would set in as soon as the troubles then impending had passed. In this they were disappointed, and their system of religion when put to the test seemed to fail.

The facts of life are seldom so clearly ordered, either in the life of a nation or in that of an individual, as to prove, from a superficial study of historical events, that wrongdoing invariably brings disaster and righteousness prosperity. Conditions are, as a rule, far too complex for any such induction as this. And a single instance to the contrary is sufficient to overthrow the argument. If the prophets did derive this doctrine from the facts of history it was not by a process of sound logical argument; for the premisses were not present to warrant the conclusion. Nor, indeed, will an examination of the prophetic writings themselves support this view. The prophets do point to periods when prosperity went hand in hand with judgement and justice;¹ and the compilers of the national history were never weary of drawing moral lessons from the facts they narrate. But it is easy to be wise after an event. One need have no hesitation in saying that the Deuteronomic redactors of Judges and 1 and 2 Kings are arguing deductively. They have the principle firmly in hand from the first, and with it they thread their way through the history, classifying the reigns of the kings as good or evil according as they do or do not harmonize with their idea of what ought to have been. They are arranging the facts in their relation to a pre-conceived principle; they are not examining them with a view to discovering principles of regular sequence in them. The prophets certainly do not use the argument from history in the way one would naturally expect them to use it, if this had been to them the fountain source from which they had themselves derived the doctrines they were striving to teach the nation. On the other hand, if the doctrine was derived from another source, it is only natural that they should from time to time point to such periods of the national history as seemed to bear out their contentions.

But if it was not recent history, could it have been the recollection of the facts of the remote past—the work of Moses and the Covenant at Mount Sinai which was responsible for the prophetic teaching?

¹ Cf. Jer. xxii 15, 16.

It is frequently said that the germs of all the later development must have been present at the first inception of the national religion in the days of Moses. If the use of this metaphor means nothing more than that, because the prophets did preach this doctrine, therefore it must have been from the first possible that they should preach it, no objection can be made to it. But if it be meant that the germinal cause of ethical mono-Yahwism was present in the work of Moses in the same sense as that in which the germinal cause of the oak is present in the acorn, so that the one is as natural and as easily explicable as the other, the statement is misleading. Given the acorn and the natural conditions necessary to vegetable life, and the oak with all its branches results by a natural process of development. Now the original Mosaism may have contained the germ of mono-Yahwism, but it must not be forgotten that Mosaism did, as a matter of fact, develop in two directions. There were, on the one hand, the religious views of the mass of the people which show themselves to be similar to those of all other Semitic races. On the other hand, there are the views of the prophetic party, which stand in violent opposition to the popular religion. For the explanation of this difference we must look for something peculiar to the prophets. We need something to explain why the minds of the prophets were receptive of these doctrines and not the minds of others. And for the same reason also, all theories which describe mono-Yahwism as the product of the natural genius or disposition of the Hebrews are totally inadequate. The natural disposition; the natural genius of the people plainly turns when left to itself in the direction common to all Semites, despite the Mosaic traditions. We still require to know why the prophets stood out against the stream.

It is the theory of Budde that 'Israel's religion became ethical because it was a religion of choice and not of nature, because it rested on a voluntary decision which established an ethical relation between the people and its God for all time'. In consequence of this moral choice and ethical relationship, its conscience awaked, whenever things went

badly, to the question, 'Wherein have I deserved the displeasure of Yahweh? What must I do to ensure a renewal of his favour and help?'¹

But this is by no means an adequate explanation. Whenever disaster befell any Semitic nation, the national conscience always awoke to ask, 'Wherein have I deserved the displeasure of my god?' It is not the asking of this question, but the answer to it, which needs to be accounted for. Why did the average Semite say the displeasure is due to ritual offences and the mono-Yahwists say it was due to moral offences?² Kautzsch would answer this by saying that the Israelite believed that Yahweh had seen Israel oppressed in Egypt, and prompted by righteousness and mercy, had delivered them. The God who had thus exhibited moral qualities in the choice of Israel would insist upon the same from His people.³ But if the prophetic conviction of Yahweh's righteousness was really the outcome of so simple and obvious a process of reasoning as this, one would surely expect to find a more constant and emphatic appeal to it than in fact we do find. If, for instance, it was a reflection of this kind which convinced Amos, it is strange that he does not attempt to convince his fellow countrymen by the same argument which convinced himself. It is unfortunate for this theory that Amos assigns no motive whatever for Yahweh's choice of Israel; he does not lay any stress on Yahweh's righteousness and mercy evinced in the exodus. If it be argued that the Covenant relation left the way open for the idea that Yahweh could live independently of His people, whereas other gods were dependent on their people by facts of physical kinship, it may be replied that this might well account for a belief that Yahweh could cast His people off more easily than an ordinary Semitic deity, but it is difficult to see why it should result in a belief that Yahweh is of a righteous character. And as a matter of fact the recollection of the Covenant was so far from suggesting that Yahweh would

¹ *Religion of Israel up to the Exile*, p. 38; cf. 36-8.

² See also G. A. Smith, *Modern Preaching*, &c., pp. 137-9.

³ *H. D. B.*, v 632.

abandon His people, that it was the surest ground of the prophetic belief that He would never do so.

Those who base the conviction of Yahweh's moral character upon any process of reasoned reflection have to reckon with the fact that the mono-Yahwists lay no emphasis upon a formal argument. They have not a vestige of doubt in their minds about Yahweh's character, and if it was a reasoned argument which made things so clear to them, that process of thought itself must have been sharply defined before their mind's eye. But it is very strange that though there are references in many of the prophets and psalms to the love and mercy which Yahweh has shown to His people, and though these are frequently made the grounds of warning from sin, or of confidence for the future, or of a claim for gratitude from Israel, there is no formal argument from the facts of history or from Yahweh's choice and deliverance of Israel to His moral character.¹ When the prophets look back upon the past, they already have the conviction firmly fixed in their minds that Yahweh is a righteous God; and if they look to history to demonstrate, and not merely to illustrate, this truth, it is the history of the future to which they look, to the time when Yahweh will arise to vindicate Himself and avenge His people.

Nor is it likely that it was the goodness of their own hearts and the exalted morality of their own characters which led them to attribute the same characteristics in an exalted degree to Yahweh. It has already been seen that the prophets have no deeper insight into theoretical morals than the people; as to practical morals, one may feel quite confident that none of them were guilty of the cruel oppression and injustice against which they protested, but it is questionable whether their moral characters were in every case so very much above the level of their day. Can we acquit Amos and Jeremiah of vindictiveness? Amos said to Amaziah the priest, who wished to prevent him from prophesying, 'Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy

¹ Cf. above, pp. 101 f.

land shall be divided by line ; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean ' (Amos vii 17). The words of Jeremiah are even stronger. ' Yet, Yahweh, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me ; forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight : but let them be overthrown before thee ; deal thou with them in the time of thine anger.'¹ To this must be added the unwillingness of Jonah to preach in Nineveh because he knew the city would repent and be delivered (Jonah iv 2), and Ezekiel's desire for the annihilation of the heathen hordes before Jerusalem (Ezek. xxxviii and xxxix). But more than this, if it could be shown that the prophets were very far in advance of their contemporaries in moral sensitiveness, would this lead them to the conclusion that Yahweh is righteous ? Would it not rather make them utterly disgusted with the national religion and with a God such as Yahweh was held to be by many ? The prophets would surely have spurned the characteristic Semitic deity just as John Stuart Mill spurned the Calvinistic deity, or as Plato excluded the tales of the polytheistic gods from his ideal republic.

But if this doctrine was not an instinctive assumption, nor developed by any process of reasoning, nor the reflection of their own moral characters, can it have been the outcome of their religious experience ? This is the question discussed in the next chapter.

¹ Jer. xviii 23 ; cf. xi 22, 23 ; xii 3 ; xvii 18 ; xviii 21, 22 ; xx 6.

CHAPTER V

THE SOURCE OF MONO-YAHWISM

PROPHECY in general presents two problems which may be discussed separately. (1) What was the source of the firm conviction of the prophets, and one may add of their audiences as well, that a message from their lips was the utterance of a divine spirit? (2) What was the mental process involved in the genesis and composition of the prophetic messages?

In the ancient world in general, a prophet was one who communicated to men messages which he was believed to have received from a deity. And if it is asked on what grounds the messages were supposed to have come from a deity, the answer must be sought in the peculiar psychical temperament of the individual. Certain persons were observed to be subject to states of consciousness so abnormal as to suggest that for the time being it was no ordinary human spirit which occupied their bodies. 'It was just the visible excitation that suggested to the onlooker that the enthusiast was possessed by the deity. Even the insane, just because he had no mastery over his mind, which seemed moved by another, was held inspired.'¹

It would be altogether a mistake to suppose that the subjects of these experiences knew them to be purely natural phenomena, but yet passed them off upon their contemporaries as something more divine than this. Quite on the contrary, it is characteristic of a certain stage of culture to explain all such mental phenomena in this way; and when a man exhibited the appropriate outward signs, there was no more doubt in the mind of the onlooker than in that of the subject himself that he was being, or had been, temporarily possessed by some deity or spirit. No other explanation seems to have been ready to hand. A belief

¹ Davidson, *H. D. B.*, iv 109 f.

of this kind was almost universal, and something analogous to prophecy is found in all religions.¹

One may say, then, that the confidence with which certain men claimed to speak a message imparted to them by a god, was grounded upon the primitive and spontaneously assumed explanation of certain mental phenomena as due to the indwelling of a divine spirit.

This same explanation is to be given of the belief in prophecy which we find in the Old Testament. The earliest prophets of Yahweh with whom we meet were plainly men of this type. When they prophesy, the spirit of Yahweh comes mightily upon them (1 Sam. x 5, 6, 10 ; xix 20-4). Samuel assured Saul that when he prophesied he would be 'turned into another man' (1 Sam. x 6), and when the spirit of God came upon him, 'he stripped off his clothes, and he also prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night' (1 Sam. xix 23, 24 ; cf. 20). In the days of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, these prophets lived in companies, possibly in part because the sympathetic co-operation of a large number was found to be of assistance in inducing the prophetic state.

With these we may compare the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the Asherah, who ate at Jezebel's table, who leaped about the altar and cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed upon them, and prophesied till the evening (1 Kings xviii 19, 26, 29).

This is the lowest form of prophecy. The prophet is not conscious himself of what he is saying, nor can it have conveyed much meaning to the hearers. It is possible that the case of Balaam represents a slight advance. Balaam was hired to curse Israel, but he assures Balak that he can only speak the word which Yahweh puts in his mouth (Num. xxii 38) ; he cannot foretell what he is going to say.

¹ Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i 131, Ed. 1900 ; Brinton, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, pp. 51-3 ; W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, p. 219 ; Davidson, *O. T. Prophecy*, p. 154 ; and *Hastings's D. B.*, iv 107 ; Giesebrecht, *Berufsbegabung*, p. 36 ; Joyce, *Inspiration of Prophecy*, p. 12. Cf. also 1 Kings xviii ; Jer. xxvii 3, 9.

God meets him and puts a word in his mouth ; but when the divine afflatus does come upon him his utterances are intelligible to the bystanders (Num. xxiii 3-5).

In 1 Kings xxii there is a kind of prophesying described which at first sight seems to mark a still further advance. These prophets are both intelligible to the bystanders and conscious of what they are saying. It is not clear whether the divine afflatus preceded the moment of speaking or accompanied it. On the one hand it is clear that Micaiah is supposed to know the word of Yahweh before he delivers it to Ahab ; for the messenger begs him to let his words be like those of the other prophets (*v.* 13), and Ahab sees reason to think that in his first utterance Micaiah has deliberately misrepresented the word he received. One might be inclined to think from this that a special visitation was not considered necessary for each message, but that once it had been shown that a certain person was subject to these abnormal states, his words on any special question would be regarded as those of the deity even though he had given no outward proofs of a divine inspiration immediately before giving forth his utterance. On the other hand, Micaiah's words about the lying spirit sent forth to entice Ahab through his prophets to go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead, point to the possibility of a special and abnormal state having taken place immediately before their utterance on this occasion at least. But whether this was so or not, it seems that the basis of the prophesying was what was regarded as the visitation of a divine spirit (*cf.* *vv.* 22-4). Just how much mental disturbance was involved in the experience of these prophets it is impossible to say ; if it preceded the utterance, it may have involved an ecstatic condition in the four hundred and fifty ; but this could not have been so with Micaiah, who remembered so clearly what he had seen and heard.

It is usual to speak of those prophets who opposed the great mono-Yahwists as false prophets ; but it would be a great mistake to dismiss them all as conscious liars. There may have been some among them who at times uttered what they felt to be a misrepresentation of the will

of Yahweh ; there were many whose moral delinquencies had darkened their natural powers of insight into moral and spiritual questions ; and few of them rose above the level of their *confrères* in other races, or that of the general consensus of opinion in Israel. One cannot exclude the possibility that some individuals may have claimed to speak an inspired message, and may have persuaded men that they had undergone prophetic experiences, without having ever done so in reality. But such cases must have been few and far between. It is most unlikely that many men in that age would have had the temerity to trifle in a matter of this kind, nor could imposture have been practised upon a large scale without detection. The false prophets must have felt some justification for coming forward as spokesmen for Yahweh, and, as a general rule, they must have seen no reason to think that what they said was not in accordance with the will of Yahweh. Their justification no doubt lay in the peculiar mental disturbances to which their psychological temperament laid them open. It is true that Jeremiah claims that his opponents were not sent by Yahweh at all, and that they are prophesying lies (Jer. xxiii 21, 32), but he also informs us that they claim to have seen visions and dreamed dreams (xxiii 16, 28). His contention is not that the ' false ' prophets have had no prophetic experiences, but that these experiences were not sent by Yahweh ; their visions are visions ' out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Yahweh ', and ' the word of Yahweh ' is sharply distinguished from the dreams of these prophets (xxiii 16, 28, 29 ; cf. Ezek. xiii. 1-9). There is, then, no reason to doubt that the large class of prophets who seem to have regarded Yahweh as a characteristic Semitic deity received credence as prophets because of certain abnormal mental states through which they passed.

II

We now have to see that the same thing is true of the mono-Yahwists also. Let us begin our study of the psychology of the mono-Yahwists by comparing them with the

so-called 'false' prophets. In the first place, it must be observed that both are known by the same name and included within the same class in the community. To the general public, both the mono-Yahwists and their opponents are 'prophets'; the mono-Yahwists themselves do not deny the title to their adversaries, and yet they recognize it as appropriate to themselves. Amos is the one prophetic mono-Yahwist who is sometimes pointed to as dissociating himself from the professional prophets (cf. vii 14); but he himself regards his own activities as 'prophesying', and as such it was recognized by others (vii 13, 15, 16). Moreover, it is Amos who said, 'Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets' (iii 7). To us who see little but the width and depth of the doctrinal contrast which separates the mono-Yahwists from the 'false' prophets, they seem to have little in common; but the fact that this divergence of opinion was not sufficient to make them appear different in kind in the eyes of their contemporaries, should prepare us to find that there was somewhere a broad basis or substratum common to both. The divergence in teaching must have appeared analogous to the differences of opinion which arise from time to time between lawyers or doctors. Men of the same profession or calling disagree in opinion, but that difference does not so completely overshadow all that they have in common as to make it appear that either side has no right to be called by the same title as the other.

In the second place, the mono-Yahwists in their public teaching do not hesitate to use the same methods as those employed by the 'false' prophets. The latter introduce their utterances with the same formulas as those which we are accustomed to hear from the lips of mono-Yahwists: 'the burden of Yahweh' (Jer. xxiii 34); 'thus saith Yahweh' (Jer. xxviii 2); 'the oracle of Yahweh' (Ezek. xiii 7; Jer. xxiii 31). There can be no doubt that the 'false' prophets meant these expressions to be taken literally, and by using them set up a claim to speak a message which they believed had been supernaturally communicated to them in moments of abnormal consciousness by Yahweh Himself.

And there is no reason why this should not hold good of the mono-Yahwists as well.

Again, both sides make use of a method of argument to which the modern mind refuses to allow any force. Both endeavour to overbear their opponents by sheer weight of assertion, one contradicting the other without any attempt to reason from common principles and admitted data. Zedekiah, the opponent of Micaiah-ben-Imlah, 'made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith Yahweh, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until they be consumed' (1 Kings xxii 11). Similarly, Jeremiah appeared before King Zedekiah with a wooden bar upon his neck to illustrate his message of submission to the yoke of Babylon. This bar Hananiah, his opponent, took from Jeremiah's neck and broke, with the words, 'Thus saith Yahweh, even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar . . . within two full years' (Jer. xxviii 10, 11). Jeremiah's reply is another similar symbolic action; the yoke of wood is replaced by a yoke of iron: 'for thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon all these nations that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar.'¹ It is a mistake to think that the mono-Yahwists were all men of more powerful intellect and greater reasoning ability than any of their contemporaries, and to contrast their mental life with that of the false prophets as though the one, guided by a deep insight and a strong intellect, were a scene of peace and prolonged thought, while the other, subject to no control but that of feeling, was a place of storm and confusion. The facts do not support this view. There is scarcely a page of their written prophecies which does not witness to the gales of passionate feeling which swept through the souls of the mono-Yahwists. Stormy indeed must have been the mental life of the so-called false prophets if it was more tempestuous than this.

How was the average Israelite to decide between these two conflicting parties? When he saw them at work, he could perceive little or nothing, apart from their doctrinal

¹ Jer. xxviii 14. For other symbolic actions see Isa. viii 12, 18; xx 3; Jer. xiii 1-11; xix 1, 10; xxxv &c.; Ezekiel iv 1-3, 4-6; v 1-4; xii 1-7; xxiv 15-18.

differences, to distinguish them from each other. To what criteria do the mono-Yahwists offer to submit the dispute? There is little more appeal to miracles than there is to argumentative proof. The return of the shadow on Ahaz's sundial is the one instance of a prophetic miracle in days later than Elijah and Elisha (Isa. xxxviii 5-8; cf. vii 11). Deuteronomy does contemplate the possibility of signs or wonders in attestation of prophetic utterances, but it is remarkable that it is those whom we call false prophets who are expected to work the sign (Deut. xiii 1, 2).¹

The two tests of any real significance which the mono-Yahwists propose are fulfilment (Jer. xxviii 9; Deut. xviii 21, 22), for which it was impossible to wait; and doctrine, 'If they had stood in my council, then had they caused my people to hear my words, and had turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings' (Jer. xxiii 22). Let us observe what is involved in this latter point. The two conflicting parties are endeavouring to obtain credence each for their own view, which contradicts that of the other side. Each alike claims divine authority for their message on the ground that it has been communicated to them by Yahweh. Yet Jeremiah asserts that his adversaries have not received a message from Yahweh, for had they done so their teaching would not have been what it was. This, of course, is a clear case of arguing in a circle. The doctrine is authenticated by communion with Yahweh, and communion with Yahweh is proved by the doctrine.

But does not this give us an insight into the secret of Jeremiah's confidence in his own message? He has himself experienced what it is to stand in Yahweh's council (סֹדֵר)², and he knows that that experience can issue in nothing but a condemnation of Israel's present condition; and because the false prophets are preaching peace, he is certain that, no matter what may be to the contrary, they have not received Yahweh's message. It is just because their confidence was based on an inner experience which could not be

¹ Cf. Davidson, *Hastings's D. B.*, iv 116-18.

² Jer. xxiii 18; cf. Ps. ii 2; Amos iii 7.

communicated to others that the mono-Yahwists make so little use of reasoned argument. Since their teaching was not, even in their own minds, the outcome of any process of reasoning, they knew not how to commend it to others by logical discussion.

With this in mind one can understand why they attack the religious experiences of their adversaries. Since the false prophets, equally with themselves, claimed, and no doubt manifested, sufficient visible indication that they had been visited by Yahweh, it was necessary for the mono-Yahwists to explain away, somehow or other, these prophetic states of their opponents. Thus we find that Micaiah-ben-Imlah explains the experiences of the four hundred and fifty prophets by saying that Yahweh, purposing to destroy Ahab, had sent a lying spirit into their mouths; while his opponent Zedekiah apparently meant to suggest that the spirit of Yahweh had not spoken to Micaiah at all, or at least not on this occasion (1 Kings xxii 20-4). Similarly Deuteronomy contemplates the possibility of some one arising with every outward manifestation of prophecy, and yet counselling a course of action which conflicts with the first principle of mono-Yahwism. The explanation given is not that such a prophet is a conscious liar, or a wilful impostor, but that 'Yahweh your God proveth you, to know whether ye love Yahweh your God' (Deut. xiii 3). Ezekiel also seems to entertain the idea that Yahweh may send a false message through a prophet; this he says may be known to be the case, whenever a prophet undertakes to deliver an answer from Yahweh under conditions which involve idolatry (xiv 1-9). And Jeremiah again, as was seen above, gives another explanation when he declares that the visions of his opponents proceed out of their own heart and that Yahweh has not spoken to them at all (Jer. xxiii 16, 21, 25, 27). Their message of encouragement to a sinful people and their own sinful example are proofs that they have not stood in the council of Yahweh. If they see a vision, it is a vision out of their own heart; if they prophesy on the strength of dreams, those dreams are lying dreams; Yahweh has not sent them nor commanded them; they

cause his people to err by their lies and their vain boasting (cf. xxviii 15). In chap. xiii, Ezekiel seems to take the same line as Jeremiah. His opponents also have been preaching peace, when there is no peace (xiii 10, 16). If they appeal to inspiration from Yahweh, Ezekiel's reply is that they follow their own spirit and have seen nothing : they see vanity and lying divination, Yahweh has not sent them (xiii 2, 3, 6, 9).

It should be carefully observed that the mono-Yahwists do not attack the whole idea of a divine revelation in religious experience. Their point is, not that Yahweh never communicates His will in ways akin to that in which the false prophets claim to have received it, but that there is something false about the experiences of their opponents. They are not what they claim to be. It is to the mono-Yahwists that the word of Yahweh has been revealed in truth and reality ; it is they who really declare His will and are the mouthpiece of His Spirit. They seem anxious to show that what the false prophets experienced was the false or spurious imitation of what had in truth and reality been granted to themselves. They attack the prophetic states of their opponents in order to establish their own. They know what it is to have received a revelation from Yahweh—that under the circumstances of their day, it must involve an exhortation to repentance and a prediction of judgement ; and it is just because other prophets preach a message of peace and prosperity, that the mono-Yahwists know they cannot have experienced a true and genuine visitation from Yahweh.

Giesebrecht maintains that the source of Jeremiah's confidence in his own divine mission must not be sought in the same kind of experience as those of his opponents, because he attacks those experiences in his opponents, and does not regard them as conveying a revelation. He suggests that Jeremiah rejects such mental processes entirely, because he looks on them almost in the modern critical light as the deception of the senses, hallucination, &c.¹ By the experiences of the false prophets, Giesebrecht here means heavenly voices and visions, states of ecstasy,

¹ *Berufsbegabung*, s. 48.

&c. It is only this kind of religious experience which he thinks Jeremiah rejects ; elsewhere, he asserts that Jeremiah's confidence is grounded on continual intercourse with Yahweh, as well as on an initial ecstatic vision.¹ While it is certain that all prophecy depended in some measure upon the experience of abnormal states of consciousness, it is indeed questionable whether we know so much about the mental processes of the false prophets as to be able to say that the words they uttered were entirely, or even to a greater extent than those of the mono-Yahwists, the product of ecstatic vision and audition. And it is still more questionable whether Jeremiah had sufficient insight into psychological processes to draw a sharp distinction in kind between the religious experiences of the false prophets and his own. It may well be that there was a difference in kind, but we have no reason to think that Jeremiah had such opportunities to study the mental processes of the false prophets and contrast them with the results of his own introspection, as to enable him to draw the conclusion with such unerring certainty that his own implied a real intercourse with Yahweh, while those of the false prophets did not. And, as a matter of fact, when Jeremiah rejects these dreams and visions, &c., he does not do so simply because they are dreams and visions, but because they have resulted in a message of peace and a feeling of religious confidence in spite of an immoral life (Jer. xxiii 22).

It should also be remembered that we really require some deep inner experience to account for the psychological phenomena which the mono-Yahwists exhibit. No mere cold logic and no mere tradition could strike such fire into a man's soul. Each prophet appears before us as a new beginning, as one who has realized for himself in a way he can never forget, the truth of the principles he enunciates. The intense conviction, the overmastering certainty, which constantly break through their language and throw their words into a series of vehement exhortations and denunciations, do not belong to the calm judicial reasoner who has carefully weighed arguments on both sides, but rather to

¹ *Berufsbegabung*, ss. 48 n. 1, 51, 68 f.

one on whose soul the things he utters have been burned in, in a moment of intensest feeling.

And when the words of the mono-Yahwists themselves are examined this view is confirmed. 'We can prove,' says Karl Marti,¹ 'in the clearest possible manner, from the prophets' own words, that the belief in the one God arose from an inner experience. They feel God's power as an inner compulsion which cannot possibly be resisted.' In support of this he quotes,² from Amos iii 4-6, 8, 'Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city and Yahweh hath not done it?' Amos is here pointing out that cause and effect are coupled together in an inevitable sequence. And then he adds, 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord Yahweh hath spoken, who can but prophesy?' Prophecy was an effect, the cause of which was a communication from Yahweh; in this sphere also the cause must be followed by its effect. Amos knew what this was, for Yahweh had spoken to him and said, 'Go, prophesy against my people Israel' (vii 15). The words of Micah are even clearer. 'But I truly am full of power by the Spirit of Yahweh, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin' (Mic. iii 8). Jeremiah experienced the word of Yahweh and knew that its effects were unmistakable, and far more forcible and penetrating than any prophetic dream. 'Is not my word like as fire?' saith Yahweh, 'and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' 'Mine heart within me is broken, all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome; because of Yahweh and his holy words.'³ Similarly, Isaiah and

¹ *Religion of the Old Testament*, p. 141; cf. Baentsch, *Altorient u. Israelit. Monoth.*, s. 89.

² pp. 142-6.

³ Jer. xxiii 29; cf. xxiii 28; and see also xv 17-21; xx 7-10.

Ezekiel found the hand of Yahweh to be strong upon them.¹

The conclusion then must be that the mono-Yahwists shared the belief of the primitive world that mental phenomena of a certain unusual kind are undeniable evidence of divine visitation and inspiration, and that the source of their confidence in themselves as the organs or mouthpieces of Yahweh's spirit lay in the fact that they had passed through moments of consciousness which they could not explain in any other way than as instances of communion with Yahweh the Living God.

III

But it is now time to turn to the second main problem of prophecy. To attempt a full elucidation of the genesis and mental origin of the prophetic utterances would involve the discussion of a very much wider psychological problem than falls within the scope of the present work. The mode by which the words and sentences, &c., came into the prophetic consciousness during those abnormal states of mind could not have been so very different from that by which, in the normal waking consciousness, whole clauses and propositions spring complete into the mind from apparently nowhere, that one could leave the latter entirely out of consideration. Fortunately an investigation of this subject does not appear to be necessary for the purpose in hand; and that for more reasons than one. The words which the prophets claimed to speak as from the mouth of Yahweh, when they use the formula, 'thus saith Yahweh,' &c., do not represent in their present form the exact words without alteration or deviation which came into the prophetic consciousness during their moments of abnormal exaltation. These formulas are used too freely and too often to represent in each case a fresh audition. Giesebrecht has shown that they mark the emphasis or are used to introduce a new thought, or even to fill up the metre.² But just in so far as the verbal clothing of the prophecies was the product

¹ Isa. viii 11; Ezek. iii 14; viii 1; xxxiii 22; xl 1.

² Op. cit., pp. 40-3. Cf. Joyce, *Inspiration of Prophecy*, p. 81 f.

of moments of normal waking consciousness, just so far does the problem of why the prophets used these particular words to convey their meaning and not others of similar import, become one which for the present purpose may be neglected, because it is not peculiar to the prophets but concerns the normal life of every other man as well. Moreover, the problem before us is not to find out why the prophets uttered just these particular syllables, why they gave vent to these sounds, but why they preached these particular doctrines; it is not the verbal clothing, but the underlying substance, the ideas and views expressed by the words, which are of real importance.

Now it is not difficult to see that the substance of the prophecies of the mono-Yahwists differed on so many occasions from that of the utterances of the false prophets, because they approached the conditions of their age with totally different views about the character and being of Yahweh. If we combine the theological views generally accepted in the Semitic world of that age with the historical circumstances of the day, we get the substance of the message of the false prophets. Similarly, if the theological principles characteristic of mono-Yahwism are applied to the same historical facts, the substance of what the mono-Yahwists said may readily be deduced therefrom. A recent writer has put this thought in an admirable manner :

‘ The prophets had events and circumstances to go upon, they possessed a knowledge of God’s character ; meditating upon such things—and we do not deny that they were assisted by what is commonly called supernatural enlightenment—they came to certain conclusions as to the ways of God, which they then applied to the circumstances in which they found themselves placed. Thus *Jerusalem will be delivered from Assyria* . . . was but the conclusion that the prophet drew from convictions which lay at the root of all his spiritual experience and religious teaching. The bare assertion may be expanded somewhat as follows : “ God has chosen Israel. He has a purpose for her. Israel has forgotten her God, so He must punish her, but He will not destroy her. His purpose shall stand. He will punish her. The means He will employ are not far to seek. The Assyrian

is already at the door. But pride, too, must be punished, and the Assyrian is proud. He does not realize that he is but a tool in Jehovah's hand. So he, too, must be taught that there is One who can put down the mighty from their seat. Therefore the Assyrian will be humiliated and Sion, after *her* humiliation, be exalted, and thus will the power and love of God be completely vindicated." '1

The prophecies of judgement may be explained in the same way. According to the mono-Yahwists, Yahweh is Himself righteous, and requires at all costs from His people a righteousness corresponding to His own. But the prophets cannot fail to see that Israel is morally corrupt, and therefore in danger of the outpouring of Yahweh's wrath, which may come in the form of sword, pestilence, famine, or wild beasts, although in most cases the political conditions of the moment pointed to a conquest by a foreign invader. That a god should be angry with and punish his people was by no means an idea unknown to the Semitic mind; the mono-Yahwists accept this idea and go beyond it in two respects, when they say that Yahweh will punish for moral wrongdoing no matter how scrupulous His people may be in ceremonial observances, and that to ensure the severity of that punishment, He will himself be arrayed against His own people. Israel is to suffer by Yahweh's decree because Yahweh has chosen Israel, and Israel has become corrupt, and Yahweh cannot endure corruption. 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities' (Amos iii 2).²

¹ Edghill, *Evidential Value of Prophecy*, p. 124.

² Giesebrecht has argued against Schwartzkopf and Riehm that the contemplation of the moral condition of Israel could not by itself have given rise to the conviction of approaching disaster. He does so largely upon the ground that it was open to any one to observe the moral condition of Israel and contrast it with the requirements of the moral law of Yahweh; and, therefore, the prophet could scarcely have brought forward a line of thought such as this as something which had been specially revealed to him alone (op. cit., ss. 79, 80; cf. 86). But was it open to any one to realize the premisses and draw the conclusion in question? No doubt they could contrast the moral standard with the corruption of the people, but would they have known that Yahweh cared more for the moral than

The mono-Yahwists are concerned chiefly with the fate of nations, especially that of Israel, and they decide them by what they know of Yahweh's moral character, omnipotent power, and love for Israel. This is nowhere more true than in the case of the prophecies of the Messianic future.¹ When they foretell the fate of individuals, they do so according as the individuals appear to be friends or foes of the message which they themselves declare from Yahweh to the nation.² It would be difficult to say how far the whole deductive process was formally and consciously worked out ; the point is, however, that given the principles of mono-Yahwism and the historical conditions of the day, there is no need to introduce any other factor in accounting for the prophetic activities of the mono-Yahwists ; whether consciously reasoned out or not, these factors are sufficient to account for the substance of their prophecies at any particular moment.

The important question, therefore, still remains to be answered, by what process did the mono-Yahwists come by their conviction of the truth of those theological views which lie at the basis of all their utterances and are peculiar to themselves ? It has been seen above that the solution is not to be found in any process of reasoning, nor in any inherited and unquestioned assumption. It now remains to be seen that the two fundamental principles of mono-Yahwism, if they could not be intellectually demonstrated by the mono-Yahwists, were inwardly felt or experienced to be true, and then, as a consequence of this feeling, apprehended by the intellect as first principles or axioms of thought.

There is one prophet who has left a description, albeit a meagre one, of a certain state of consciousness through which he passed, and which he attributed to the immediate

the ceremonial law ? It is only those who start from this view of Yahweh's moral Being, which is one of the fundamental principles of mono-Yahwism, who draw the conclusion in question. And these were of course the mono-Yahwists.

¹ See below, Chap. VII.

² Cf. Giesebrecht, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel. What he says of this state of mind enables us to understand from a purely psychological point of view, how he came to be so firmly convinced of Yahweh's supreme sovereignty and righteousness. The question of the ultimate cause of this state of consciousness must be left on one side for the present. It must have been experienced, else it could not have been described; and once experienced it must issue in these two beliefs. The experience in question is narrated in the sixth chapter of Isaiah.

It should be noted first, that the prophet does not lose consciousness; on the contrary, he becomes acutely conscious. He is filled with the thought of himself, and that because he feels himself sharply distinguished from and contrasted with another Personality. He is conscious that his personality is being measured by a standard which is so much greater than he can attain to that the two appear quite incommensurable. This vivid sense of personal inadequacy brings with it the feeling of an intense strain, more than human life can endure. 'Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King Yahweh of Hosts.'

Isaiah felt his life to be in danger. 'Woe is me!' he cries, 'I perish.' The intensity of the feeling to which this cry witnesses may be brought out by the force of two contrasts. The superstitious dread that death will ensue upon contact with certain objects (or if certain mental phenomena are experienced) is a familiar feature in the life of primitive man. In such cases there is an anticipation that death will shortly follow; and such an anticipation of approaching death is perhaps to be discerned in what is told us of Gideon and of Manoah, both of whom are described as in fear that death will result from the experience through which they have passed (Judges vi 22-3; xiii 22). But this interpretation cannot be put upon the experience of Isaiah. The cry that he is perishing is wrung from him at the moment when the feeling is at its height. It is not a presentiment of future death; it is the expression of a feeling that the

bonds which unite soul and body are even now about to burst asunder. Again, when a man has a feeling that death is rapidly approaching, it is in many cases due to the fact that his powers are gradually failing him ; the sensations he receives through the natural channels grow weaker and weaker ; consciousness becomes thin and pale ; he feels that his powers are dying out one by one ; he becomes less and less conscious of himself until the feeble flame flickers out. In such cases, it is the gradual waning of consciousness which causes the apprehension of death. But in the case of Isaiah, as has been seen, consciousness did not wane. What causes his apprehension is the very vividness of his consciousness, the nakedness with which he sees his soul contrasted against another Personality. If death is sometimes apprehended because consciousness is felt to be dying out, in this case death is apprehended because consciousness is passing the bounds of life in the opposite direction. It is becoming so acute and so intense, the sense of strain and inability to cope with the situation is so severe, that the prophet feels that soul and body are on the point of being torn apart.

No man can pass through such a moment and remain unchanged. The content of that state of mind must always remain for him the most real thing in the world, that by reference to which he will interpret all his varied experiences of life. At such a moment his mind receives a bent, has impressed upon it a certain set of axioms, as it were, from which his thinking never escapes. In writing of experiences which, from a psychological point of view, are the same in kind with those of Isaiah, Professor W. James says :

‘ They are as convincing to those who have them as any direct sensible experiences can be, and they are, as a rule, much more convincing than results established by mere logic ever are. One may indeed be entirely without them ; probably more than one of you here present is without them in any marked degree ; but if you do have them, and have them at all strongly, the probability is that you cannot help regarding them as genuine perceptions of truth, as revelations of a kind of reality which no adverse argu-

ment, however unanswerable by you in words, can expel from your belief.’¹

But to return to the particular case under discussion, Isaiah understood that the cause of his experience was the immediate presence of Yahweh the God of Israel. It was inevitable, therefore, that to him the Personality of Yahweh should be the most real thing in existence. He might have doubts on anything else, but the intense moment of his ‘call’ could not allow him for an instant to question the efficacy and the reality of the presence of Yahweh. From Him there could be no escape. His power could know no limits. His Personality must fill up the prophet’s whole mental horizon. Other gods, who had never been the cause of such moments, must sink into insignificance; indeed, the mere wood and stone with which they were identified would be felt to be incapable of giving rise to moments of such intensity or of exercising any real influence on human hearts or human affairs. With the unreflecting idea of causation which was current in those days, one can well understand how a man who underwent such an experience would see the personal will of Yahweh behind every event which happened, rather than a multitude of conflicting and independent wills; other wills would not have for him any effective existence. ‘The foundation of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke.’ In a moment the prophet is filled with a sense that he is in a presence infinitely higher than that of man; he himself and his human origin and nature stand out in contradistinction to this Divine Personality: ‘Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.’ The seraphic song, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is Yahweh of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory,’ was but the echo of the feeling which was throbbing through the prophet’s soul; had he never heard the words his conclusion would have been the same.

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 72 f.; see also the whole of Lecture III, pp. 53–77; cf. also for another interesting illustration from a different source, Ramsay’s *Education of Christ*, pp. 9–11.

The results of such an experience cannot be better described than in the words of two of the Psalms. In one of these (Ps. cxxxix), the writer describes how all-pervasive is the presence of Yahweh, not only intensively in the heart of man, but extensively in the world of nature. 'O Yahweh, thou hast searched me and known me, thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Yahweh, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me . . . whither shall I go from thy spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, and the light about me shall be night ; even the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day ; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.'

The other Psalm (cxcv) describes well the theological reconstruction which would follow on such an experience, explaining how impossible it is to imagine any communication proceeding from the idols of the heathen, what folly it is to trust in them, and how the very fact that Yahweh's presence is not made visible by any image of wood or stone is a guarantee of His power and creatorship. 'Wherefore should the nations say, where is now their God ? But our God is in the heavens ; He hath done whatsoever he pleased. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not ; eyes have they, but they see not ; they have ears, but they hear not ; noses have they, but they smell not ; they have hands, but they handle not ; feet have they, but they walk not ; neither speak they through their throat ; they that make them shall be like unto them ; yes, every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in Yahweh : He is their help

and shield. . . . Blessed are ye of Yahweh, which made heaven and earth. The heavens are the heavens of Yahweh, but the earth hath he given to the children of men ' (Ps. cxv 2-9, 15, 16). The writer of this psalm has evidently felt himself to be in communication with an invisible spiritual Presence, a Person, who is in the heavens, whom he identified with Yahweh ; and it was apparently this which called his attention to the impossibility of receiving any communication from the wooden lips of the man-made deities of other races. One can well understand how, as the result of such an experience as this, the prophets came to see the will and power of Yahweh behind every event in the world. Such an experience would not alter his conception of causation—that would still remain the immediate operation of a personal will—but, instead of a multitude of conflicting wills, he would see the single almighty will of Yahweh intervening immediately, universally, and ceaselessly. Hence that view of the universe and its happenings which is characteristic of the mono-Yahwists.¹

In this experience, then, there is a sufficient psychological explanation of the origin of the first principle of mono-Yahwism, that Yahweh is the one and only divine Being. And the second principle, that He is righteous, was also derived from the same source. The prophet Isaiah, it was pointed out, experienced an intense feeling of personal inadequacy ; he felt himself to be measured against another Person and to come short. On one side stood Yahweh in unapproachable holiness and majesty, and on the other stood the prophet himself and his fellows : ' Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.' (Isa. vi 5). The immediate result was a feeling of intense personal unworthiness, a sense of sin and of guilt which must be removed. ' Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged ' (vi 7).

A deep sense of guilt is found in the Babylonian Psalms ; but this feeling follows upon disaster. The individual or the nation is in trouble and feels the wrath of some god pursuing

¹ See chap. iii.

him. Hence the expression of a deep penitence, and the anxious desire to please the deity. But, as was pointed out above, the feeling of sin which Isaiah experiences is not occasioned by an overwhelming calamity. It is the very presence of Yahweh which fills him with this awful consciousness of his own unworthiness. It is not that Yahweh is in a mood of angry indignation and needs to be placated ; it is Yahweh's very nature and character to be holy, because the mere contact with Him produces at once this feeling of human unworthiness and guilt. Here we have just that element which is so strikingly absent from other ancient religions—the subjective sense of personal unworthiness for the divine presence, a feeling of awe, or dread before God, which is not related in the prophetic mind to any one special sin, nor to the thought of divine vengeance or punishment, but is occasioned by the fact that the Person who is there, is what He is. Accordingly, Isaiah could not but realize that Yahweh was Himself absolutely holy and righteous, the fountain source of all purity and goodness, to whom all that can be called ' sin ' or ' iniquity ' must be repugnant. His opposition to wrongdoing is not fitful and capricious ; it is the expression of His inmost Being, His permanent attitude towards men. And so to Isaiah, Yahweh becomes differentiated from all other gods as one whose character is known—known to be upright and just—known to be set against evil, and as a consequence it is certain that no immoral people can hope for His favour.

It would be a mistake to suppose that Isaiah meant by the terms he used, something very different from what his contemporaries understood when they spoke the same words. ' Holiness ' had always meant that which is separated from common use and appropriated to divine service ; it did not necessarily express moral purity, but ' the distance and awful contrast between the Divine and the human '.¹ ' Uncleanliness ' was the very opposite of ' holiness ', that which is farthest away from Yahweh, and offensive to Him. Both these words had a ritual rather than a moral significance. ' Sin and iniquity ' included not only offences

¹ W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, p. 224.

against Yahweh's moral law, but offences against His ceremonial law as well. When Isaiah says that Yahweh is 'holy', and he and his people are 'unclean', he is expressing a feeling of general human infirmity and unworthiness before Yahweh. Yahweh is the absolute supreme sovereign Lord on whom all depend and to whose will all must bow; He dwells in depths of effulgent purity of which the only thing the prophet knows is that he himself and all his people are utterly unworthy to enter there. It would probably be a mistake to suppose that the two ideas of physical and moral purity were clearly distinguished in Isaiah's mind. The purity and holiness of Yahweh no doubt implied freedom from all that the prophet had been brought up to regard as 'unclean' from a ritual point of view, as well as all that we should call morally wrong.

When we combine the probable effect of this experience upon the prophet's mind with the historical facts of his day, we have a satisfactory explanation of his teaching. Just as Isaiah had experienced Yahweh's infinite power in his inner soul and therefore knew it to be both universal and irresistible, so also he had experienced Yahweh's holiness and knew it to be the very essence of His Being. As there could be no escape from Yahweh's power, so there could be no failure or diminution or wavering in Yahweh's purity and righteousness. His favour could never be towards a people who persist in violating those principles of righteousness and judgement which are the expression of His inmost Being. Those who imagine that Yahweh overlooks these things entirely misjudge His character. If they will not listen to the exhortations of Yahweh's messengers, it cannot be but that the face of Yahweh will be turned away from them and they will suffer the most just and terrible punishment.

That His people, so morally rotten in their national life, should approach His presence and lightly tread His courts, confident in the rich abundance of their sacrifices and cheerfully forgetful of their sins, could only be the more displeasing to Him, because it denied His essential purity and holiness and equated Him with the idols of other races.

Nothing but repentance and moral reformation can avert His wrath. 'Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow' (Isa. i 14-17).

It may be claimed, then, that in this experience of Isaiah we have that which will account for his peculiar teaching and activities. Are we justified in inferring that the other prophets also derived their doctrine from a similar source? Of this there cannot be much doubt. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for instance, prefixed to their prophecies an account of a religious experience, the same in kind with that of Isaiah. It is true that we do not find in their experiences all the features which are found in the case of Isaiah; both prophets felt themselves to be in the presence of a Personality of immense power, and are conscious that a task is being laid upon them, which they feel themselves utterly incapable of carrying out, until they receive strength from the same source from which the task comes. The note of personal moral unworthiness, however, does not find expression (Jer. i; Ezek. i-iii 14). But it would be a mistake to conclude from the silence of the prophets that nothing of the kind had taken place. Both prophets relate their experiences, not in order to give a full introspective account of all that passed in their minds, but to prove to their contemporaries that they had a right to speak in the name of Yahweh because He had visited them and commissioned them to do so.

It has already been seen above that Amos and Micah appeal to religious experience as proof of the genuineness of their prophetic message; there need then be no hesitation in accepting these experiences as the source of the substance of their message. And what is true of these prophets may be safely inferred of others; for the conditions are the same and the results are the same. The negative argument

from silence is of no value here, because the presence of abnormal religious states of mind would be assumed in the case of every one who appeared in public as a prophet, and what has come down to us is a summary of their teaching rather than a detailed and analysed account of their mental life.

Not all the mono-Yahwists, of course, were prophets. Many of them were psalmists, compilers, editors, and law-givers. But the intellectual atmosphere of the whole Old Testament, in the Pentateuch and historical books as well as in the prophets, is so plainly the same in kind with that of the prophets that one can scarcely doubt that the same results are due to the same causes, and that here, too, religious experience is the source of mono-Yahwism. The omnipotence and moral uprightness of Yahweh was impressed upon them also, although, perhaps owing to differences of psychical temperament, these experiences expressed themselves in activities other than those commonly called prophetic.

CHAPTER VI

THE VALUE OF THE JEWISH RELIGION

So far this inquiry has been carried on under the limitations which are proper to scientific inquiry, i.e. without any assumption whatever as to the ultimate nature of Reality, or the possibility of intercourse between God and man. The results so far reached appear to hold good no matter what view be taken of the ultimate nature of existence. But when the last word of historical criticism has been said and the last scientific analysis has been performed, when the progress of events has been traced back to its elementary beginnings in the human mind, it still remains to rise to a higher point of view and to endeavour to see these facts in the light of a definite belief as to the meaning of existence. The following discussion, therefore, frankly assumes a theistic position. It assumes that the ultimate Reality is spiritual, a holy moral Person, who created the universe, who is at once immanent in the world as the ground of its existence, and also transcendent above it ; and that Revelation and Religion are true, i.e. that it is possible for men to have a knowledge of God and to hold personal communion with Him.

This assumption raises all our terms to a higher power, and so it becomes necessary to examine them again. In the first place, the word ' Religion ' is now to be used in a sense which up to this point has had no place. When we say that Religion is true, we mean that it is possible for man to experience a state of mind in which he holds communion with the Eternal Spirit, the Creator of the world. This does not, of course, imply that such communion has taken place whenever any man has believed himself to have had intercourse with a divine Spirit ; but it means that it is not beyond the powers of human nature to know God personally. In this

use of the word, then, one is thinking of something which is inward, mental, and psychological, states of mind of a certain definite character. But when we speak of the 'Hebrew religion', as distinct from the Egyptian or Babylonian religion, it is clear that 'religion' does not mean primarily any psychological phenomena, but certain external facts, rites, common beliefs, divine names, &c., by which one system is distinguished from the other. Here it covers quite a different set of phenomena belonging to a different order of things. For the sake of clearness one ought to speak of 'historical' religion and 'psychological' or 'spiritual' religion; but perhaps the use or non-use of a capital will serve to distinguish in which sense the word is meant to be understood.

'Religion', then, stands for those states of mind in which man has communion with God; while 'religion' means the outward manifestations of the religious life of man. This, of course, is not an exhaustive classification; for we have not reckoned those states of mind which are commonly called 'religious' but in which there is no real communion with God; to cover this class a third term is needed; but it seems necessary to get along without it, unless we speak of 'true' Religion and 'false' Religion.

Let us observe, again, that with this assumption it becomes necessary to distinguish our phenomena into true and false. From the lower standpoint of pure science such distinctions are quite meaningless. The materialist may deny that God exists, but he cannot deny that the phenomena commonly called 'religious' exist. These phenomena, therefore, are fit subjects of scientific inquiry; and the scientific student has nothing whatever to gain by attempting to distinguish them into true and false. His duty is to observe, classify, and trace causal relations between, all the data which come under his notice; he gains no more by calling one religion, or one religious state of mind, 'false' and another 'true' than the astronomer gains by saying that one star is true and another is false. But the moment we assume the possibility of Religion, these distinctions become all-important. For if it be true that man can know God, the

question arises, when any man claims to have had a religious experience, was it true ? did he really hold communion with God or not ? Is this really a case of Religion, or is it a spurious imitation of Religion ?

But how, it may be asked, is it possible to answer these questions ? What tests can one apply to distinguish the true from the false ? Who can say when a man has known God and when he has not ? It is surely possible to apply at least one test. We know how in personal intercourse between men the strong invariably influence the weak. So also must it be with God, the Almighty and inconceivably Holy. No one can have known God personally and yet continue to think that He is one among many others, or that He is indifferent to moral conduct. Shall we say, then, that the religious states of mind of all those who believe in one righteous God are true ? What if they are merely cases of an 'uprush' from the subconscious ? Unless we can exclude the possibility of such an upheaval from the hidden depths of our own beings, we cannot say whether or not any particular religious experience is a case of true Religion. But this must be discussed more fully below.

The word 'Revelation' also needs to be touched upon. If God is immanent in the world, then one may indeed regard the world as containing a revelation of God. For those who have eyes to see and the ability to understand, there is a real knowledge of God obtainable from the study and interpretation of the facts of existence. But if God is transcendent as well as immanent, another mode of Revelation is at least conceivable—a mode in which God does not leave man to discover Him by his own efforts, but reveals Himself directly. It would be a waste of time to attempt to determine in just what way it is likely that such a Revelation would take place ; but one cannot exclude the possibility that God might disclose His existence and character to men without their searching for Him in and through the phenomena of nature. It would be better if one could confine the use of the word 'Revelation' to this conception ; but it has come to be the fashion to use it for that knowledge of God which we gain through the study of nature ; and there

is little use in arguing about words so long as we are quite sure of their meaning. Perhaps the use or non-use of a capital letter will here also serve to preserve a distinction ; ‘revelation,’ then, means the knowledge about God which man derives from reflection on the facts of existence, and would perhaps be better called ‘human discovery’ ; ‘Revelation,’ on the other hand, stands for a knowledge of God given directly to man by God Himself and not mediated through reflection on the nature of existence. Whether there is reason to think that such a Revelation has actually been given must be reserved for discussion below ; it will, however, conduce to clearness to have a conception such as this in one’s mind. The dividing line between ‘Revelation’ and ‘revelation’ is not that the former is God’s effort to seek after man and the latter man’s effort to seek after God ; for we do not know that the Eternal Spirit is not seeking to disclose Himself to man through his own powers of observation and reflection. In the one case, man arrives at a knowledge of God’s existence and character by a slow and painful process of endeavouring to solve the riddle of existence ; in the other case, this knowledge comes directly without being mediated through such a process of reflection.

II

With these distinctions in mind, then, let us endeavour to review the religious life of man in order to see the value which should be assigned to the experiences of the mono-Yahwists. To begin, then, with the ancient polytheistic world outside Israel. It was seen in the last chapter that many men passed through inner experiences of a very vivid character, in which, they were fully convinced, they had been in communion with a divine spirit. The vivid sense of objectivity which these experiences carried with them is, of course, no guarantee that they were cases of true Religion ; it is explained by psychologists as due to what has been called ‘unconscious cerebration’. Psychology ‘teaches us by innumerable examples that by far the majority of the impressions on our senses leave no trace in conscious recol-

lection, although they are stored in the records of the brain ; that what seems lost to memory still lingers in its recesses ; and that mental action is constantly going on and reaching results, wholly without our knowledge.'¹ What is thus stored up out of sight in the subconscious mind suddenly comes to light in an 'uprush' from beneath the level of consciousness.

'The most complex mechanical inventions, the most impressive art-work of the world, even the most difficult mathematical solutions, have been attained through this unknowing mechanism of mind. They seemed real inspirations, but we may be sure that the mind through long *conscious* effort had been storing the material and laying the foundation for the perfect edifice which sprang so magically into existence.'²

The suddenness with which the new thought stands revealed in the mind creates the impression that it has been imparted from the outside ; but in reality it is merely the product of our own mental faculties, which suddenly and unexpectedly appears from below the threshold of consciousness. There does not appear to be any element in the religious experiences of the polytheists which cannot be fully accounted for in this way. An upheaval from the depths of the subconscious mind creates a vivid sense of objectivity ; but no new truth comes up from these hidden depths ; the same old world of polytheistic deities which had long been familiar objects of normal consciousness is once more brought to light in an abnormal manner. These, then, may be explained simply as cases of self-suggestion.

And there is another reason which makes it impossible to regard them as instances of true Religion. The polytheists always went away from those experiences without a shadow of doubt that the person with whom they had held intercourse was limited in power and of no special moral character. Can one think that men could enjoy intimate personal intercourse with the inconceivably Holy and Mighty Person of God, and yet continue to think that He is one among

¹ Buntin, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 53.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

many others, or that the best way to please Him is to sacrifice their chastity or their children in His honour? Surely these men could not have experienced God; for if so, they could not have continued to think of Him as they did. There is, in the content of these experiences, nothing to justify a refusal to take the natural and simple explanation which lies ready to hand, that they are instances of an 'uprush' from the subconscious. The truth is that the old polytheisms were a positive obstacle to real Religion, because they represented the Deity in an unworthy form, as having an outward resemblance to created objects; and worse still, they engendered in men a wholly false sense of moral equality with the divine. In representing the gods as morally fallible, they overlooked the awfulness of wrongdoing and caused men to approach their deities with a blind confidence that no wide gulf in respect of moral character separates man from God. This foolish confidence in his moral equality with the divine is ever the greatest hindrance in man's approach to God, because it is the antithesis of true Religion. And since this is of the essence of polytheism, polytheism must disappear or be abandoned before the road is open for an approach to God in spirit and in truth. The religious nature of man performed its functions then as it does now, but it fastened itself upon the creature rather than the Creator. If any men did know God personally in those days, it was in spite of the polytheisms and because they were not successful in misleading them.

To say this does not imply that the polytheists were entirely apart from the Spirit of God or beyond the pale of His love. It only means that the polytheistic religions were a hindrance to the personal knowledge of God. God is immanent in man as in all else, and all that is good and true in the thought and life of men of every age and place may justly be ascribed to the promptings of His indwelling Spirit seeking to guide them into the truth and to express Himself in and through them. But all this is not Religion, because it does not imply conscious fellowship with God. Religion is something more than the divine immanence of God in man, for this man shares with the rest of creation. Religion

implies an intercourse between God and man, a fellowship, a commerce in which man recognizes God and consciously submits himself to His divine love and will in worship. But God is good ; and those alone submit themselves to Him who choose what is good and pure, because they know that this is what He is. We may desire to know God and to lift up our hearts to Him, but if we imagine that this may be done without a moral regeneration and a crucifixion of all that is evil in us, we are simply deceiving ourselves. True Religion involves a choosing of goodness, because this is His will, and a rejection of evil, because it is contrary to His will. If we are to know God in that higher mode which is conscious fellowship with Him, we must, by our own act of moral choice, crucify the lower self and fling wide the gates of our souls to welcome the Divine Companion.

But the ancient polytheisms not only afforded no opportunity for any such act of moral choice, they also negatived the idea that it could be necessary. It is true that they encouraged the subordination of self to the interests of the community ; but they did not identify the divine with goodness, nor did they hold that the favours of the gods depended on a moral life. One could choose the polytheistic gods without choosing goodness ; one could enjoy fellowship with them without any sense of moral unworthiness. It is small wonder that the cult of the gods was at most times both popular and joyous ; it involved no acceptance of a high moral standard difficult and painful to live up to, but rather encouraged men to seek the divine in and with the gratification of the desires of the flesh. In so far, then, as true communion with God is concerned, these ancient religions were an obstacle rather than a help.

Nor can it be said that the polytheisms supplied men with much true knowledge about God. In depicting the divine as divided into so many different personalities, who were often in conflict with each other, and as having an attachment to localities and to figures of created things, and as being of indifferent moral character, they were a travesty of God rather than the truth. There is no reason to suppose that there was any direct Revelation from God here, nor

even any revelation in the sense that men had discovered for themselves what God is. There may have been some elements of what is true in these ancient religions, but in the midst of so much confusion as to the real essence of the being and character of God, they appear as negligible quantities.

III

And yet one need not think that God left Himself without witness in any race of men. If God is immanent in the universe, if the universe is His creation, then to those who have eyes to see and minds to understand, the world of man's environment must be eloquent of God. God 'left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness'. 'For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity.' The book of Nature was there to be read with all its glorious message from God; and when St. Paul lived, serious efforts to read it had already been made. In the polytheistic age, however, men did not apply their faculties to the solution of the great world-problem, but contented themselves with certain assumptions inherited from a remote past. When, however, they at last set themselves to read the book of Nature, it was not long before the unreality of the ancient polytheisms was discovered; and this, in turn, yielded to the induction that there is one infinite Spirit who is all-wise and all-holy, and to whom alone the word 'God' is in truth applicable.

This discovery was the work of the Greek genius. It was clearly a revelation, a discovery by man of the truth about God's existence from the study of God's handiwork in the created world. We may also call it a divine revelation, if we like; for surely these Greeks were not without a large measure of the indwelling Spirit. But it would be quite a mistake to suppose that it was in any sense a 'religious' revelation. It was certainly not the result of religious experience, nor was it in any way mediated through the

ancient polytheisms ; on the contrary, the process of investigation on which it rested had to be carried on in the face of much opposition from the side of the old religion, and in the end it deprived that religion of all semblance of truth. Nor, again, was it a Revelation, i.e. a knowledge of God communicated apart from the study of nature. The process by which it was reached can be traced from point to point throughout its course, and everywhere it presents itself as a process of human observation and reflection.

But when the Greeks had once opened men's eyes to the truth that there is but one God and that He is good, the religious life of man entered upon a new phase with new opportunities. A conception of what God is, in some measure adequate, and of what communion with Him would involve from a moral point of view, now became a permanent possession. Men now had some true idea of the spirit in which the divine ought to be approached, and knew that they were not on terms of easy moral equality with Him. It was now possible to make the free moral choice involved in true Religion, to go in search of God knowing that the lower self must be sacrificed to obtain fellowship with Him.

And many entered on the search in serious earnestness. All kinds of asceticisms were practised, and all sorts of mysterious rites were performed in the Graeco-Roman world to purify the soul for an approach to God. The one great difficulty was that no one could tell for certain just where to turn to find Him. Many claimed to know, but it was clear that they could not all be right. The religious life of man was thrown back upon itself in confusion for lack of authoritative guidance. While there was much which was dark and much which was superstitious in the religion of even the more educated classes, yet there were, no doubt, here and there, a few who sought God in humility and truth, and in readiness to sacrifice everything for Him. And surely there is no reason to doubt that those who thus sought God in spirit and in truth, and endeavoured to do what they believed to be His will, did indeed receive an adequate reward. Who is to say that such good and profoundly reverent minds as those of Socrates and Plato, for

instance, were far from the true knowledge of God ? One reservation only would have to be made at this point. If some of the philosophers were not far from the real presence of God, this was not the source of their knowledge that He is one and is good ; that knowledge, as has been seen in chapter i, came from another origin.

IV

But let us now turn to the phenomena of the Hebrew religion. In the first place, the content of the experience of the mono-Yahwists cannot be explained solely as the result of an 'uprush' from the subconscious. While this explanation may be applicable elsewhere, it does not hold good here. The polytheist was confirmed in his belief in many morally indifferent gods, because his subconscious memory had long been charged with suggestions of the reality of these gods. So the modern monotheist, brought up in an atmosphere of monotheism, finds that his subconscious self reveals a single God. But one thing seems quite clear regarding the mono-Yahwists. There was nothing in their past lives, before they entered on these peculiar experiences, to suggest to them the truth of mono-Yahwism. The inherited assumptions, the logic, and the entire intellectual atmosphere of their day, suggested to them, from childhood onwards, the truth of polytheism and the hollow unreality of ethical monotheism. Their belief, then, was not an 'uprush' from the hidden storehouse of memory or of unconscious cerebration ; if we must speak in these terms, it would be more true to call it by Professor Percy Gardner's term, a 'down-rush' from the 'super-conscious'.

And yet there must have been some sufficient cause for these experiences. Perhaps one might make use of these phenomena in an argument in support of belief in the existence of God ; but, if we start from the premiss that God does exist and that it is possible for men to have communion with Him, then surely we must see instances of such communion in these experiences. They bear about them every mark of a personal communion with God. How

profoundly one human personality may be influenced by another, when brought into close contact with it, is a matter of common observation. The strong impress themselves upon the weak in many subtle ways, of which both are more or less conscious. One cannot think that it is otherwise with the Almighty and All-holy Personality of God. Granted that personal intercourse with Him is possible, surely, where an impression of inconceivable power and purity is so burned in upon the soul that it never ceases to believe in the almighty power and moral purity of God, one must see evidence of genuine communion between God and man. As has been seen, the experiences of the Hebrew prophets were just of this type ; they felt themselves to be in the presence of an Almighty and All-holy Person with such an intense sense of reality that it changed for them the whole meaning of existence. If this is not personal intercourse with God, then such intercourse is not to be found anywhere ; and either it is an impossibility, or else man has never yet been permitted to enjoy it.

And if this is admitted, then these experiences must also be regarded as constituting a Revelation, i.e. a knowledge of Himself given by God directly and not through man's attempt to find Him out by reflection on the problem of existence. The difference between mono-Yahwism and philosophical reflection as modes of revelation may be illustrated thus. A man born blind might be educated in natural science, so that he could tell us many things that are true about such a thing as sunlight, its physical properties, its chemical action, and so forth. If, however, he were born blind, he would never have felt that personal experience of sunlight which the rudest barbarian who is born with normal powers of sight enjoys every day of his life. Philosophical speculation may give us a knowledge akin to that of the blind scientist ; but the mono-Yahwists experienced God personally. Now the barbarian's experience teaches him many things that are true about sunlight ; his knowledge may not be as exact or as well ordered as that of the blind scientist ; but for the ordinary purposes of his everyday life it is far more useful ; and just so also, when the mono-

Yahwists experienced God, they learned in those moments much which is true about Him ; and the things which they then learned about God were the things of practical importance for a man to know for his soul's health, even though they state them in terms which sound crudely anthropomorphic to the sensitive ear of the metaphysician.

So far, then, there seems to be some reason for regarding each of these states as an instance of communion between God and man and as a case of divine self-Revelation. And there are still other points to be taken into consideration. It is a remarkable thing that, so far as we know, experiences such as these were confined to the Hebrew people. We have not, it is true, an exhaustive account of the religious states of mind of every prophet of every race, and therefore, in strict logic, it is impossible to establish a universal negative. But this much at least may be said with safety : if any others in the ancient world passed through such moments as these, the evidence of it has perished ; we cannot exclude the possibility that similar states may have occurred elsewhere, but if so, they were isolated and disconnected instances which were not part of any definite system or plan of Revelation. It may perhaps be that evidence will some day be forthcoming to show that experiences such as those of Isaiah occurred in the ancient world outside Israel ; but, if so, it is hardly possible that they will be found to form part of a religious development, so remarkable at once for its continuation from age to age and for its beneficial effects upon mankind, as was the case with the experiences of the Hebrews. For the peculiar experiences of the mono-Yahwists initiated a sequence of events which has been quite unique.

Let us observe, in the first place, that they are frequently repeated during the course of several centuries. Beginning with the writers of the Jehovistic and Elohistie narratives at the end of the ninth and early part of the eighth century B.C., they are continued with Amos and Hosea in the North, and Isaiah and Micah in the South, down to the end of the eighth century. In the reign of Manasseh (696-641 B.C.) no great mono-Yahwist prophet appears, but

probably we should date the composition of the main part of Deuteronomy in this period. From the days of Josiah (639-609 B.C.), however, the stream of witness is continuous through the exile down to the return in the sixth and fifth centuries with Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the second Isaiah, Haggai, Malachi, and others. We do not know that these experiences ceased even then, but with the promulgation of the Law by Ezra in 444 B.C. mono-Yahwism became the accepted creed of the whole nation; and so, in the absence of the former background of unbelief, experiences such as those of Isaiah would hardly manifest themselves in precisely the same manner.

Then, again, we observe that they always came in close association with the Name of Yahweh, the national God of Israel. None of those who enjoyed these states of mind seem to have imagined that the God with whom they held intercourse was other than Yahweh, the God whom they knew to be served by many of their contemporaries as a characteristic Semitic deity, nor was any one of them ever detached, in consequence of these experiences, from his allegiance to the national God of Israel. If, then, there was an act of divine self-Revelation in any one of these states, this constant association with the Name of Yahweh can scarcely be a matter of chance, nor can it be due to the idiosyncrasies of an individual; it argues a special divine choice of this Name as a medium of Revelation. If any one of this series of experiences represents an act of divine self-disclosure, then the series as a whole, linked together by the Name of Yahweh, the national God of Israel, represents a scheme, or better, as will be seen below, the beginnings of a scheme, of Revelation.

But let us see what is involved in this admission that the Name 'Yahweh' was chosen to be a means of Revelation. It implies that special opportunities and privileges were given to the nation which worshipped this God Yahweh. It implies that there was a truth, a reality, about this national religion which was not shared by any other. And more than this. It was the unquestioned assumption of the men of that age that the outward forms of religion were pre-

scribed by the gods themselves, each one of them having communicated his will in the matter through his priests, prophets, or other inspired persons. And so also the national system of religion in Israel was believed to have been revealed directly by Yahweh Himself. Hence the inevitable consequence of associating these peculiar experiences with the Name of Yahweh was to cause those who enjoyed them to believe that Israel's national religion represented the directly revealed will of the one Almighty and All-holy God. Since, under the conditions of that day, this belief necessarily followed from the constant linking of these special states of mind with the Name of the national God of Israel, it seems that we must include this as part of the divine scheme, and say that the entire system of Israel's religion, with all its outward forms, was chosen with the Name 'Yahweh' to be a means of divine self-Revelation.

But here a distinction must be drawn. When we speak of Israel's national system of religion, our minds run back to the corrupt practices against which the prophets protested, and with these in view, it is natural to feel that there must be some flaw in this reasoning. But, as was seen in chapter ii, these corruptions, and the confidence reposed in the mere performance of ritual, were no part of the original religion of Moses, but were borrowed from the Canaanites and their Baal worship. And the fact that these abuses were always denounced as violations of the will of Yahweh by those who experienced His power and holiness is a proof that these outward forms can lay no claim to be a part of the religious system sanctioned by the divine choice of the Name of Yahweh.

On the other hand, it is of importance to observe that a system of religion of a very different kind came into existence as the direct result of the union of the Name 'Yahweh' with the inner experience of an Almighty and All-holy God.

In the pre-exilic period, as was seen in chapter ii, there were two levels of religious thought in the nation—the lower level of those who regarded Yahweh as a characteristic Semitic deity, and the higher level of the mono-Yahwists.

The cultus was, for the most part, upon the lower level ; for although the sanctuary at Jerusalem was comparatively free from the worst abuses, yet the religious celebrations at the ' high places ' had taken on all the debasing features of the Canaanite ritual. In the reign of Josiah an attempt was made to capture the entire national system of religion for the mono-Yahwist belief by the suppression of the ' high places ' and the limitation of sacrifice to the central shrine at Jerusalem ; and a ritual was carefully constructed with a view to expressing the essential principles of mono-Yahwism. While this reform met with some temporary success, the nation was not yet prepared for so sweeping a change ; a reaction set in and the cultus of the popular party reasserted itself with renewed vigour under Josiah's successors. The exile, however, wrought a profound change and left the balance of power in the hands of the mono-Yahwists. Let us remind ourselves that in those days what gave a nation its cohesion and self-consciousness was the worship of a common god. When the national religion became extinct, there was nothing to hold the individuals together, and consequently the national spirit broke down. The surest way to prevent the rebellion of a subject race was to stamp out its religion ; and the only effective way of doing this was to transplant the entire people to a distant and alien soil ; for this not only proved the imbecility of the national god, but also made the organized practice of the national religion impossible. Hence the individuals soon fell apart and amalgamated with the local population of their environment.

In the exile this great disaster befell the people of Israel. Many said that Yahweh was a broken god, and turned to the worship of deities whom they considered more helpful. That all the Israelites did not follow this example was due to the influence of such men as Ezekiel and the second Isaiah, and their magnificent faith and courage. The national life went into a state of solution ; the less receptive, the more unbelieving elements were set free and adhered to other religions. When it was reconstituted again, it was composed of those only who could respond to the teaching of

the mono-Yahwists and believe that Yahweh is something more than a characteristic Semitic deity. It required no little courage and faith on the part of the Jews to abandon their new homes in Babylon and set out for what was now a strange country, though full of many sad memories. But there was idealism enough to respond to the call ; and that certainty of Yahweh's power and love, which came in moments of religious exaltation, was not wanting to cheer the little community through many a sore trial and bitter disillusionment.

After the exile the religious life of the nation entered on a new stage of its existence. The old debasing and immoral corruptions, which had crept in under Canaanite influence, were purged away. A new ritual took its place which was designed to express the idea that Yahweh is the Almighty and All-holy God and that Israel is to Him a peculiar people among all the nations of the earth. The re-writing from the mono-Yahwist point of view of the old traditions regarding the origin of the world and the early history of Israel, which had already been begun before the exile, was now taken up again in earnest and carried to a conclusion. Mono-Yahwism became the accepted creed of the whole people. The national system of religion thus came to represent a high standard of religious belief and moral conduct, and as such was passionately and devotedly cherished by the best and most truly religious minds in the nation.

Let us observe that this is something absolutely unique in the history of religions. This is the one instance in which we can properly speak of the development of a religion into a definite monotheism ; the advance to monotheism was everywhere else fatal to the old religions, and it triumphed by their downfall. But here, at a time when Greek philosophy was still in its infancy, when the civilized world still lay in the grip of polytheism, this national religion, without ever losing consciousness of itself as one and the same all through its history, divested itself of all polytheistic accretions and influences, and organized itself upon the basis of a pure ethical monotheism ; and this took place as the result of a continued series of religious experiences, each of which

commends itself to us as an instance of communion between God and man. The remarkable thing about post-exilic Judaism is surely not that it became the religion of a book and a system of ordinances to be fulfilled according to the letter, but that now, for the first time in history, there appeared an organized system of monotheistic religion.

It is for this monotheistic system, which is summed up in the New Testament under the term 'the Law of Moses', that a claim to special divine sanction can rightly be made; for that system would never have come into existence had not these instances of divine self-Revelation been continually associated with the Name of Yahweh, the national God of Israel, and confined to those who served Him.

There is at the present day the strongest kind of prejudice against any limitation of religious privilege to one race or creed; it is felt that God will reveal Himself to those who seek for Him, no matter what race or religion they belong to. If this feeling represented the divine Will in truth and in fact, one would expect, on looking back over the history of the ancient world, to find that instances of real communion between God and man were not confined to any special group of men, but that now one in one race, and now another in another, was led to believe in one Almighty and All-holy God who was behind all existing forms and distinctions in religion, and could not be identified with any one of them to the exclusion of all others. So far as one can see, there is no reason why this might not have taken place. And if it be true that God cares nothing for the outward organized and corporate aspect of religion, but only for the individual in and by himself, one would rightly have expected to find that these experiences of God's power and holiness ignored all outward bounds between nations and religions. But we are not the best judges of how God may or may not give a Revelation of Himself. One can only say that on looking back over the history of the pre-Christian world, we find, on the one hand, no positive evidence of any such experiences outside Israel, and, on the other, clear indications of their continuation in connexion with the Name of the national God of Israel for century after century,

until the whole national religion was definitely organized upon the basis of a belief in one Almighty and All-holy God. This limitation to Israel points to the conclusion that God does care for the outward aspect of man's religious life, and that He chose this national religion to be the matrix of a divinely authorized system of religion to which all men should adhere.

Let us look at this point again from a slightly different point of view. Granted that God willed to vouchsafe a Revelation of Himself through the medium of religious experience at that time and under the conditions which prevailed in the ancient Semitic world, it is conceivable that such cases of true Religion might have come to men in one of two ways. (1) They might have been vouchsafed irrespective of race and religion and apart from any divine name then known ; or, (2) they might have been confined to one specially selected race and its religion. But under the conditions which prevailed in those days, no third alternative is conceivable, because any other method would have introduced confusion. Supposing, for instance, that certain Moabites were led to believe that Chemosh is the one and only God ; and that certain Babylonians were led to claim that title for Marduk ; and, again, the prophets of Israel to assert that Yahweh is the only God—if this had happened, the result must have been such confusion and discord as would have nullified the Revelation completely. These gods were distinct personalities, as distinct as the races which worshipped them. To the Babylonian the claim of the Moabite and the Israelite alike would have appeared blasphemous and intolerable ; while just in proportion as the experiences of the Israelites and the Moabites were cases of real and true communion with God, just so much the more would they have been impelled to resist and deny the claim of Marduk. The result must have been a fierce and bitter strife, if not a war of extermination, in the name of the All-holy God. This much at least one may say, that if anything of this kind had occurred, we would have been quite right in denying that such experiences could represent a Revelation of God to man.

Under the conditions of that age, then, there are two alternatives for a Revelation through religious experience ; and the two are widely and unmistakably different from each other ; the one, in which such experiences are vouchsafed without regard to race or to the outward forms of religion, leads directly to the inference that the outward is incapable of assuring us of any special divine blessing ; the other, in which they are limited to a single religious system, brings us as directly to the conclusion that this special system has been chosen to be the channel of an assured communion with God. And when we turn back the page of history to observe what, as a matter of fact, has happened, we find that the verdict of the past is in favour of the latter of these alternatives, and against the former.

Having reached this point, a number of additional considerations and possible objections at once come into view, and with these one must now attempt to deal, though in some cases one can only foreshadow what is discussed more fully in succeeding chapters. (1) Let us observe, first of all, that the Jewish system pointed beyond itself to a yet greater manifestation of God. Believing that the only and Almighty God had revealed Himself to the Hebrews alone and had made them His worshippers, the prophets felt sure that a time would come when He would reveal Himself yet more fully to Israel, and, through Israel, to all the nations of the world. Here, then, is a test of the truth of mono-Yahwism. Was this belief in the unique value of the Jewish religion justified by the occurrence of anything in Jewish history which we can recognize as a further manifestation of God in and through this religion ? This point is discussed in chapter vii.

(2) And this brings us to a second point. Whatever view be taken of His Personality, the teaching of Jesus possesses immense weight in matters of religion. What was His attitude, then, towards this claim of special privilege and sanction for the Law of Moses ? The universal answer will be that it was He who freed men from the burden of the Law, stripped religion of its national setting, and set before the world the conception of the universal love of God. But how did He free men from the Law ? If He freed any one,

He freed the Jews of His own day ; and they believed they were bound to the Law because it had been supernaturally revealed from heaven. Hence, if Jesus freed these Jews, He could have done so only in one of two ways. Either He freed them by opening their eyes to the fact that they never had been bound to it, by proving that the Law never had had any supernatural sanction ; or else, He freed them by claiming to possess supernatural authority to do so, by authoritatively abolishing the Law from its position of divine obligation, and authoritatively establishing a new mode of access to God. It will be seen in chapter viii that the latter is the alternative which should be adopted. Whatever degree of authority be assigned to Jesus and His teaching, the whole of it may be quoted in favour of this view of the value of the Jewish religion. In the first chapter of vol. ii it will be seen that the universalism of Christianity was not due to the influx of any liberal notions about the native equality of all men in the sight of God, but to the fact that certain Jews, who remained passionately devoted to the God of the Mosaic Law, were convinced that Jesus of Nazareth possessed supernatural authority to reorganize the ancient national religion, i.e. to institute a New Covenant between the national God and His people ; and they found, when they came to apply the terms of this New Covenant to the conditions around them, that they were such that the highest privileges of the ancient, but now reorganized, religion, were laid open to the Gentiles upon precisely the same terms as to the physical children of Abraham. Hence the universalism of Christianity.

It cannot, then, be raised as an objection to this view of the Jewish religion that it implies the exclusion of the vast majority of men from religious privilege, as though God cared for some only and not for all. The limitation of privilege to Israel was, as a matter of fact, a part of the preparation for, and under the religious conditions of that day a necessary part of the preparation for, the ultimate inclusion of all in one world-wide self-conscious fellowship.

And if it be thought incredible that God should impose an obligation to observe special outward forms or ceremonies,

such as those of the Mosaic Law, one must point out that the observance of the Law, by keeping the Jews from amalgamating with other races, served the purpose of preserving their monotheistic faith from the corrupting influence of the surrounding polytheisms. And, again, one must not overlook the fact that the obligation to continue to observe the Law was abolished by the greatest Figure in the history of mankind, Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed divine authority to supersede the Old by a New Covenant.

Nor can it be urged against this view of the Jewish religion that it does not form part of a beneficent scheme of progress. The experiences of the mono-Yahwists, the establishment of a national system of monotheistic religion, the character, teaching, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, the reorganization of the ancient religion into the universalism of Christianity, the spread of Christian missions from that day to this—where can one find a parallel to this series of events? The experiences of the prophets did not end with themselves; they initiated a sequence of closely related and vitally interconnected effects which has now become world-wide and age-long, and has proved itself of the highest value in the upward advance of the human race.

And there is something significant in the relation, in respect of time, in which this series stands towards the general progress of civilization elsewhere. In the first place, when these experiences began to make their appearance, the polytheistic age was about to draw to its close. The greatest of the mono-Yahwist prophets flourished in the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C. The first of the Greeks who explained the world without the help of the polytheistic gods appeared in the sixth century B.C. The latter half of the fifth century may be taken as the time when mono-Yahwism became the established creed of the whole Jewish nation, which synchronizes with the life of Socrates (469–399 B.C.), the first philosophical monotheist. The dates of Plato are 427–347 B.C. and of Aristotle 385–322 B.C. It is thus quite plain that the establishment of the Jewish national religion upon a definitely monotheistic basis was brought about prior to, and quite independently of, the philosophical

activities of the Greeks. The centuries which immediately succeeded these events saw the conquests of Alexander the Great and the rise of the Roman Empire. In the train of Alexander went Greek culture and the Greek ideas of the universe ; and in consequence, the rapid decay of the old national religions and a growing demand for something better. The Roman Empire furthered this movement by making the world conscious of itself as a whole, and giving it an opportunity to take stock of its ideas. Things were now ripe for a change ; the old religions were bankrupt ; from serious-minded men the cry went up for an assured means of access to one Holy and Supreme God. It is small wonder that, under such circumstances, the Jewish religion attracted a large number of religiously-minded Gentiles. Wherever the Jew went, he took his sacred Scriptures ; and, sooner or later, he built himself a Synagogue. And here, week by week, the children of Abraham met together with those Gentile inquirers who felt the power of the Jewish monotheism and observed the Law in varying degrees of fullness. While these ' God-fearers ' were numerous, comparatively few of them were converted to Judaism, because comparatively few were willing to submit to circumcision and to the sundering of every natural tie of blood and friendship which the observance of the whole Law entailed for a Gentile.

Things were in this state when the ancient monotheistic religion of the Jews underwent a profound transformation. It suddenly appears in a new form, disentangled from the national limitations of Judaism, and claiming to be able to bring salvation to the whole of mankind without distinction of race or station in life. There is something providential about the moment at which this change takes place ; for on the one hand, the progress of civilization had brought the religious life of men to a point where it stood in dire need of just such a religion as Christianity ; and on the other, Christianity could not have flourished so well save in an intellectual atmosphere such as that which the spread of Greek thought had created. If the transition from Judaism to Christianity had taken place at a much earlier age, or in a country too remote to come in contact with Greek thought,

the Christian monotheism would have found itself in an uncongenial atmosphere with no one to appreciate or to feel the need of it. On the other hand, Greek thought threw the religious life of the old world into confusion. Now that the old gods were abandoned, men knew not where to turn to find God, nor how to satisfy the demands of their religious instincts. While some choice spirits may have known God in truth, the religion of the common man was a fearful medley of superstitions and mysteries. With the decay of the traditional religions went also the decline of the old consuetudinary morality. The ancient civilization was passing into the corruption of unrestrained self-indulgence, because there was no clear line of moral duty visible anywhere. The call to morality needed a divine sanction to give it force ; it needed a proof that duty is of divine and not of human origin ; but Greek philosophy left men without any assured means of communion with God and without any divinely authorized revelation of His will. It was just the absence of something which could prove itself to be a definite communication from God that robbed every moral effort of its power, and threatened to corrupt the religious life of man into a hopeless confusion of superstitions. Had the Graeco-Roman civilization been left to itself, it would probably have returned of itself to savagery ; certainly, it would never have survived the inroads of the barbarians.

But the experiences of the Hebrew prophets, startling the ancient world from its centuries of polytheistic slumber, appeared just in time to lay the foundations for the religion of Jesus Christ. And Christianity supplied the world with just what it needed to save it from retrogression. Its trumpet-call to a higher moral life rang out in the Name of one Almighty God and provided that inspiration to fresh endeavour which could not be found elsewhere ; it welcomed men to a religious fellowship which worshipped one holy moral God and claimed to have a special revelation of His will ; it provided an atmosphere in which the religious life of man could develop along lines of wholesome progress ; it commended itself by good works and the mutual love of its members ; and it proved its claim to the possession of truth

supernaturally communicated by pointing to its ancient origin, quite independent of Greek philosophy, and by appealing to the ancient scriptures of the mono-Yahwists and their fulfilment in Jesus the Messiah.¹

In a very real sense, then, these experiences of the mono-Yahwists initiated a process of events by which the religious life of man was provided with just that kind of home it most needed when it had shaken off the grasp of the ancient polytheisms, and by which the moral life of man was provided with that incentive to right conduct which alone could save the social organism, when, through the failure of the old morality, it was in danger of dissolution.

But let us now endeavour to gather our conclusions together to a focus. No real religious value can be assigned to the ancient polytheisms. The essentially religious nature of man insisted on some satisfaction then as it does now, but these systems of religion were obstacles to the true knowledge of God. With the rise of Greek philosophy these obstacles were removed, and men were able to go in search of God with some idea of what He is and of what finding Him would mean. And one may well think that those who sought for Him with repentance and humility met with some due reward. Now if this were all that is to be said on the subject of the transition to monotheism, if we had no other facts to record, we would rightly conclude that true Religion is independent of all outward systems.

But however much emphasis we may lay upon the enlightened views of the philosophers, and however much truth we may see in their religious life, we cannot shut our eyes to another series of facts. Just before the old polytheism broke down, we find a succession of experiences which bear every mark of being instances of communion with God. And these experiences came in such a way, always in connexion with the name of the national God of Israel, that they resulted in the establishment of a definite organized system of religion devoted to the worship of one Almighty and Holy God. And, again, just at the moment when the progress of civilization brought men to a point where they

¹ Cf. Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Pt. I, Bk. II.

stood in need of a monotheistic religion with an assured means of approach to God, this ancient system underwent a reorganization in which all its former imperfections and limitations were done away, and all that was best in it was retained. And this transition from Judaism to Christianity took place under the authority of no less a Person than Jesus of Nazareth. Our conclusion, then, must be that it was God's will to consecrate the outward organized aspect of religion as well as the inward and individual aspect ; and that He vouchsafed the true knowledge of Himself to the Jews in order that their national system of religion might become the matrix of a divinely authorized organization in which all men of every race and position should unite before Him to accomplish His will.

V

Against any such position as this there is a very strong prejudice at the present day. But why should it be thought unworthy of God to select a religious organization and endow it with His special divine authority and sanction ? Such a choice does of course imply a temporary limitation of privilege to a few. But against this must be set the consideration that in the case before us that limitation was temporary only, and its aim was the ultimate inclusion of all. If it be objected that even so there is an inequality, one must point out that the denial of a special choice such as this does not make men equal. The inequality of men is one of the hardest and most stubborn facts of life. No two men are born with absolutely equal opportunities and endowments, and no two races have an absolutely equal heritage. There is no use our asking why all created things were not made absolutely perfect from the beginning ; the fact remains that we progress from lower to higher. And in this process of advance it seems necessary that one race or individual should, for a time at least, possess privileges and advantages not given to others. One may be quite sure that the polytheists received as much as they were able to appreciate and willing to receive ; and if they did not have

the same opportunities as others, they will not be held responsible for a failure to use those opportunities.

On the other hand, there are reasons why the provision of a divinely authorized system of religion appears to be more in keeping with the divine love than the lack of such provision. All men are not of the same psychological temperament. While there may be some who, when they seek God, experience a state of feeling which leaves them no doubt whatever that they have been in communion with Him, yet these are usually the minority; there are very many others, equally devout and equally desirous of knowing God, who never know what it is to pass through such a state of mind, whose souls are not swept by violent gales of intense religious emotion. These men need some other assurance of communion with God, and the provision of a divinely authorized system of religion supplies that need; for it assures all those who seek God in spirit and in truth that He does meet with them under certain definite outward conditions. This does not, of course, mean that the performance of ritual can be offered as a substitute for that inward contrition and faith which are essential to a true approach to God; but rather, that an assurance of God's favour and fellowship is given by these outward means to those who turn to Him in the right spirit.

Again, if we can believe that God has appointed definite means of approach to Himself, we can have no doubt that our religious endeavours are of value in His sight and that He does seek for fellowship with us. On the other hand, if no such divinely authorized system of religion has been appointed, the very absence of divinely assured means of communion would seem to indicate an attitude of indifference.

Once more, man is by nature a social animal. The individual cannot realize himself or fulfil his being except as a member of a society in organic union with his fellows. What reason, then, is there for thinking that the individual can attain his full stature as a son of God apart from others? Why should it be thought that in his relation to God he may stand naked and alone, and realize the full capacity of his nature without reference to other men? We are members

one of another in our spiritual and religious lives as well as in our social and economic lives. In order to exercise our religious capacities we must and do organize ourselves together, for here more than anywhere else does the individual seek the company of his fellows. It is impossible to do away entirely with the outward in religion. But is that outward to be one or many? If the human race is one in the sight of God, and if God loves all alike, then surely there should be but one outward religious system of which all should be members. Once it is granted that the individual cannot stand alone in his religious life, what ground is there for cutting the race up into so many different sections, each with its own separate religious system and fellowship? The ideal must be the inclusion of all in a single fellowship; the individual cannot fully realize his capacity for communion with God until he approaches God as a member of a religious brotherhood in which all the rest of mankind is associated with him.

Some there are who would maintain that there is a spiritual fellowship of all those who seek God, which is independent of all outward conditions and exists in truth and reality in spite of all visible and apparent separations. If there is some measure of truth in this position, it must be granted that there is a yet higher and truer fellowship than this. At best this is but passive, something which exists though men have not chosen it nor sacrificed their own private preferences to attain it. There is a brotherhood between us which is based on facts of physical descent; there is also a love which is based on moral choice, on the preference of the other's welfare above one's own likes and dislikes. This latter undoubtedly represents the higher moral ideal. The fellowship that involves a moral choice to be at one with others, a conscious voluntary submission of self in order to reach them and be at one with them, is something higher than a fellowship that involves no such choice. And so the appointment of a divinely authorized system of outward forms to which all alike should submit, and which all alike should choose, provides an opportunity for the creation of that higher spiritual fellowship which is based on moral choice.

CHAPTER VII

THE MESSIANIC HOPE

It has been well said somewhere that whereas other nations look back into the past to see the reflection of the glory of their race, the Jews looked forward into the future. The unconquerable hope with which the Jewish nation contemplated the future is something peculiar to themselves. There may have been yearnings after a future happiness, the product of a natural desire to be happy, among men of other races,¹ but nowhere else did this vague yearning assume the form of a confident and definite expectation such as is found among the Hebrews. There must be some explanation of the fact that, in spite of constantly repeated disappointments and in the face of desperately adverse circumstances, there were, during a period of eight centuries, always some among the Hebrews who not merely clung tenaciously to the belief that the future must reverse the present, but who seem to have been unable to contemplate the future without seeing in it a period of conspicuous blessing and happiness for Israel—the Messianic Age.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the word ‘messiah’ represents the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ and the Greek χριστός, and means ‘anointed’. The Hebrew word is properly an adjective and was frequently used as such. Not only persons, such as prophets, priests, and kings, but also things, such as the garments of the priests, &c., were sanctified to the service of Yahweh by being anointed.² The ‘messiah’ or ‘anointed’ of Yahweh might be any one of His servants, or one of whom He made special use, as of Cyrus (Isa. xlv 1), but especially did it apply to the King of Israel (Ps. ii 2).

¹ Cf. Oesterley, *Evolution of the Messianic Idea*, pp. 123 ff.

² 1 Kings xix 15, 16; Exod. xxix; Lev. viii; 1 Sam. xv 1; xvi 12; 2 Sam. ii 4, 7; v 3, 17; xii 7; 1 Kings i 34.

In much later times, when men were looking for the arrival of a great representative or plenipotentiary of Yahweh, it was appropriated to designate this figure and so acquired a technical sense.¹ The adjective 'messianic', then, properly applies to the person called 'the Messiah', and to what relates to him alone ; but it has been found convenient to give it a very much wider significance. The Messiah was but an incident, albeit an important one, in a very wide scheme of things ; an incident in this sense, that the future scheme of things which the prophets and apocalyptists foresaw, very often did not include any figure analogous to that to which this name was applied. The thought of a personal Messiah was not an essential element in the hopes of the Jews, but the term 'Messianic' has been adopted from the part to designate the whole. The Messianic hope in this wider sense covers not only the hope of a personal saviour and deliverer, but also all those very varied expectations of an optimistic character with which the Jews for many centuries looked forward into the future.

II

Before attempting to discuss the causes of this wider Messianic hope, it will be well to examine briefly the substance of which it was composed. While it assumed many different forms at different periods, yet it always revolved around certain fixed points. It was always and essentially a religious matter ; whatever blessings or punishments are in store, they all come from Yahweh, the God of Israel. And in the second place, there was always a national element in it ; Israel, or a nucleus of righteous Israelites, was to be either the sole recipient of the blessings, or the means of imparting them to others also. The thought of these two, Yahweh and Israel, is always present in every form of the hope.

In the earliest strands of the Pentateuch, the Jehovistic and Elohist narratives, the hope is quite clearly expressed, though its details are left vague and uncertain. Israel is

¹ *Pss. of Solomon*, Ryle and James.

to be a great nation, as numerous as the sands of the sea.¹ They are to possess the land of Canaan for ever ;² and in Israel all the families of the earth are to bless themselves.³ These are the oft recurring elements of the Hope as it appears in J E, though the ideas of material prosperity and political supremacy appear to be touched upon as well.⁴ It is not usual to call these passages Messianic, but clearly they express an optimistic outlook into the future, and as such there is no reason why they should be excluded from a consideration of the national hopes of Israel. They do not, it is true, imply any sudden change brought about by a special act of intervention ; but the future blessings are, none the less, the work of Yahweh, and the idea of a special act of intervention in the world of international relations is the natural accompaniment of a time when political conditions seemed to forbid the hope of improvement without it.

To Amos the future is one of darkness with no brightness in it (v 20). His pessimism is occasioned by his deep sense of the ineradicable corruption of the people and their stubborn impenitence. When he contemplated the possibility of repentance, he saw the possibility of a brighter future (cf. v 5, 14). This message of approaching doom is repeated by the other pre-exilic prophets, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah, as well as by the exilic Ezekiel. But with these latter prophets the punishment is distinctly corrective and preparatory ; it is not a mere vengeance ; its aim is to purify Israel for the enjoyment of the high calling to which Yahweh has called it. Beyond the period of discipline a new era is discerned, in which Yahweh and Israel will be reunited as God and people. From the farthest corners of the earth the scattered tribes will be restored to Zion,⁵ and the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel will again form one political and religious organization.⁶

¹ Gen. xii 2 ; xiii 16 ; xv 5 ; xviii 18 ; xxii 17 ; xxvi 4, 24 ; xxviii 14 ; xlv 3.

² Gen. xii 7 ; xiii 15 ; xv 18-21 ; xxvi 3 ; xxviii 13.

³ xii 3 ; xviii 18 ; xxii 18 ; xxvi 4 ; xxviii 14.

⁴ Gen. xxvii 27-9 ; xlix 10.

⁵ Isa. xi 11, 12, 16 ; xlix 22 ; Ezek. xi 17, &c.

⁶ Hos. i 11 ; Isa. xi 13, 14 ; Jer. iii 18 ; i 4, 5 ; Ezek. xxxvii 16-23.

In post-exilic times the thought of a future punishment for Israel does not appear. It is apparently felt that in the exile Israel has received double for all her sins. Henceforth there is laid up for her the crown of mercy alone.

In the Messianic Age Yahweh and Israel are to be reunited in a bond which shall never fail; Israel will serve Yahweh in righteousness and holiness, and Yahweh will bless Israel with the fullness of His blessing in all matters, spiritual, material, and political.¹ Material prosperity and political supremacy are but the natural accompaniments and outward manifestations of the great central feature of the Hope, the spiritual and religious blessings which will come to Israel on that day of union with Yahweh.

It is not, however, necessary to lay stress on these. It is more important for the purpose in hand to observe that in the Messianic future there is to be one God universally worshipped and one religious system universally practised. This will not come about by the identification of all existing deities with one great God, as though they were all manifestations of Him under so many different names, nor by the abolition of all outward distinctions between religions. Quite on the contrary, all other objects of worship except Yahweh will be deserted, and all other religions abandoned except that of Israel. Such glorious phenomena will accompany the inauguration of this period, that the fame of it, of Yahweh and Israel as God and people, will go out into all lands and the whole world will confess that Yahweh alone is God. There will be one universal religion because all others will be suppressed and a monopoly given to the service of Yahweh. This may be brought about by the extermination of the Gentiles.² Or the Gentiles may submit voluntarily, forsake their own gods as useless, and seek to be united to Israel. 'O Yahweh, my strength and

¹ Hos. i 10; ii 16-23; xiv 1-7; Amos ix 11-15; Isa. i 26, 27; iv 2-6; xi 1-10; xxx 18-26; xxxii 1-20; Jer. xxxi 31-4; xxxiii 14-18; Isa. xlv 8; li 3-11; liv; lv; lx-lxii; Zeph. iii 11-20; Ezek. xxxiv 10-31; xxxvi 8-38, &c.

² Cf. Isa. xxiv; xxxiv; xiii 1-6; Zeph. ii; iii 8-10; Joel iii 2-19; Mic. iv 11-13; Zech. i 19-21; xii 3, 4, 9; xiv 1-4, 9; Hag. ii 21, 22.

my stronghold, my refuge in the day of affliction, unto thee shall all the nations come from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Our fathers have inherited naught but lies, even vanity and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make unto himself gods, which yet are no gods ? Therefore, behold I will cause them to know, this once will I cause them to know mine hand and my might ; and they shall know that my name is Yahweh ' (Jer. xvi 19-21). ' The labour of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabaeans, men of stature shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine ; they shall go after thee ; in chains they shall come over ; and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee ; and there is none else, there is no God. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. They shall be ashamed, yea, confounded, all of them ; they shall go into confusion together that are makers of idols.' ¹

According to the great prophet of the Exile, when the day of vindication comes, a ' law ' (תִּוְרָה) and a system of religious ordinances (צִוְוֹת) shall go forth from Israel as a light to the Gentiles (Isa. li 4). Hence Israel is to be ' a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples ' (Isa. lv 4 ; cf. xlii 1, 4 ; xlix 6). Other passages there are which leave it an open question whether the Gentiles will submit or prove recalcitrant ; in the former case, there is mercy in store for them ; but in the latter, destruction. ' And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, As Yahweh liveth ; even as they taught my people to swear by Baal ; then shall they be built up in the midst of my people. But if they will not hear, then will I pluck up that nation, plucking up and destroying it, saith Yahweh ' (Jer. xii 16, 17 ; cf. Isa. lix 18, 19). ' For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted ' (Isa. lx 12). In still other passages, it is apparently anticipated that a remnant of the Gentiles will survive the

¹ Isa. xlv 14-16 ; cf. Isa. ii 2-4 ; = Mic. iv 1-3 ; Isa. xi 10 ; xlix 6, 7 ; lv 5 ; lvi 7, 8 ; Zech. ii 11 ; viii 20-3 ; Ps. xxii 27-9 ; lxxviii 29-32 ; 1 Kings viii 41-3, 60.

destruction of the rebellious and become converted. 'And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, neither shall it be upon them; there shall be the plague, wherewith Yahweh will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles' (Zech. xiv 16-18; cf. Isa. lxvi 19-24). The ultimate universality of the worship of Yahweh is contemplated in yet other passages, but the process by which other religions are to be brought to an end is not specified.¹

Although the Gentiles are to recognize that the religion of Israel is the only religion which it is at all worth while to practise, yet it does not follow that they are to be admitted to the same level of religious privilege as the Jews. The idea is rather that the blessings which Israel enjoys 'will attract the regard of all peoples and awaken in them the longing to participate in them'.² The wealth of the Gentiles will flow to Jerusalem for the support of Yahweh's people and the upkeep and adornment of the Temple and its services.³ 'And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and aliens shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of Yahweh; men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.'⁴ Since the Almighty chose Israel out of all the families of the earth, it is only natural that the mono-Yahwists should expect that, however great may be the blessings derived by the Gentiles through Israel's day of union with Yahweh, yet

¹ Mic. vii 16, 17; Jer. iii 17; iv 2; Ps. xlvii; lxxv 2; lxxvi 4, 8; lxxxvi 9; lxxxvii; Isa. xlv 22-4; liv 5; Hab. ii 14.

² Driver on Gen. xii 3; cf. Gen. xviii 18; xxii 18; xxvi 4; xxviii 14; Jer. iv 2.

³ Isa. xxiii 18; xlv 14; lx 3-9, 11; Zech. xiv 14; Ps. lxxii 10, 11.

⁴ Isa. lxi 5, 6; cf. xiv 1, 2; xlix 22, 23; lx 3-16; Dan. vii 14.

the blessings of Israel itself will be richer still and even more abundant. In only one passage are any Gentiles equated with Israel in respect of religious privilege in the Messianic future. 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth : for that Yahweh of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance' (Isa. xix 24, 25 ; cf. 18-23). And in only one passage again does the writer appear to contemplate the continuation of any other worship than that of Israel. 'For all the peoples will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God for ever and ever' (Mic. iv 5).

III

On what grounds did this strange confidence rest ? What was the source from which sprang this eternal Hope ? Why should this insignificant tribe have been so convinced that their religion was destined to become universal ? Their line of thought may be briefly summarized as follows. Yahweh is the one and only God, Creator of all things and men, supreme sovereign of the universe. But, under existing conditions, His worship is limited to the nation of Israel while other peoples worship what is false and illusory. Israel, it is true, does not now receive that respect and recognition among the nations to which it is entitled by the greatness and power of its God. But the time must come when Israel's God will arise and will make known to all that which is not now recognized, that He alone is God and that Israel is His people. Then will the political, material, and moral condition of Israel adequately reflect the majesty, mercy, and righteousness of Yahweh.

That the worship of the one Almighty God should be for the present confined to so small a people as Israel was, in the opinion of the mono-Yahwists, no mere chance, but the outcome of a series of deliberate acts of choice on the part of Yahweh. Things are thus because He thus intended and planned them. According to the Hebrew traditions, when

the flood subsided Noah builded an altar to Yahweh (Gen. viii 20), and Yahweh entered into a covenant with Noah and his sons (Gen. ix 9). Just how this primitive unity of worship was broken up and the service of other gods was inaugurated, is not made clear. The only explanation given is that of Deuteronomy iv 19, which warns Israel from worshipping any of those objects 'which Yahweh thy God hath divided unto all the peoples under the whole heaven'. How or when this division took place, we are not told; but, on the other hand, the process by which the children of Israel came into the possession of the knowledge of the one God is told with some care. It was a repeated act of choice. Yahweh called Abraham (Gen. xii 1, 2); He chose Israel to the exclusion of Ishmael (xxi 12) and promised to Jacob, but not to Esau, the inheritance of Abraham and Isaac (xxviii 13-15). The process is one of exclusion, of narrowing down; the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, though children of Abraham, are simply passed over, left on one side; and by His own act the Creator confines the knowledge of Himself to Isaac, Jacob, and His children. To set out this process of selection in unmistakable terms is one of the chief objects of the Priests' Code; but the same thought is present in the earliest strands of the Pentateuch as well. "Though the actual words are not used, Jehovah is first described as 'choosing' Israel in Deuteronomy (iv 37 al.)—J has a clear consciousness of Israel's 'election' and 'vocation'.¹" Accordingly, it seems that the exclusion of the other children of Noah must have appeared to the mono-Yahwists to be part of a conscious purpose, a deliberately formed plan, on the part of Yahweh.

From this it follows that, in the belief of the mono-Yahwists, Yahweh the only God has selected the children of Abraham in order to bestow on them special blessings—special blessings which will certainly attract the attention and rouse the envy of the Gentiles, if indeed they are not to be imparted to them through Israel. Hence the future is faced with confidence by the mono-Yahwists. Their special doctrine of the sole Deity of Yahweh is so far from leading

¹ Driver, *Genesis*, pp. xxi f.

them to a liberal universalism, that it is the very ground of their confidence in the ultimate supremacy of Israel's religion. Yahweh is the one and only God ; Israel alone are His people ; therefore they and their religion will be exalted. The more clearly defined and more firmly fixed mono-Yahwism becomes, as time advances through the Captivity to the Return from the Exile, the more convinced are its exponents of the glorious future which they believe to be just about to break forth. None of the prophets have a firmer grasp upon the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh than Ezekiel and the second Isaiah ; and it is in their works that one finds the surest confidence, even when the national fortunes were at their lowest ebb, in a future of glory for Israel. In choosing Abraham and his seed, Yahweh the Almighty God has committed Himself, as it were, to a certain course of action from which they feel sure He will not draw back.

There are two sides or two aspects to this line of thought, which, though often closely interwoven, may yet be treated separately for the sake of clearness.

(1) The emphasis may be laid upon the thought of Yahweh's Name, His reputation, as it were, in the world of men. Since Israel is His people, men judge of Him and His power by the position which Israel occupies in the world. The idea is that the position of Israel in the visible world indicates the position of Yahweh in the invisible world, in much the same way as that in which the position of the hand on the dial of an engine indicates the amount of unseen power within. Hence one finds (*a*) that the Hebrew writers very often ascribe their deliverances in the past to Yahweh's care for His Name, because His Name is profaned by the humiliation of Israel ; (*b*) that the Gentiles are represented as inferring from the degradation of Israel, the supineness of its God ; and so there are prayers to Yahweh to intervene for Israel for His Name's sake ; and (*c*) that an assured confidence is expressed that, for His Name's sake, He will so intervene.

(2) Or the emphasis may be laid upon the thought of what Yahweh has done in the past, how He chose Abraham and

His seed and by an oath promised to give them His blessing ; how He delivered them from the Egyptian bondage and made a covenant with them through Moses ; how He chose David and swore that he should have a son to sit upon his throne for ever. In all this there was a purpose. As He Himself is righteous and holy, so He would make for Himself a people righteous and holy to reflect His own character. Despite their unworthiness and ingratitude, He will not cast them off entirely. He remembers His covenant and the oath which He swore unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and when the work of purification is done, He will then fulfil His purpose and bless His people with every imaginable blessing. That which Yahweh has begun, He surely will accomplish. Accordingly the Old Testament writers (*a*) ascribe the great deliverances of the past to His recollection of His oath and to His faithfulness to the Covenant ; and (*b*) they constantly implore Him to intervene now for the sake of all that He has done for His people in the past ; and more than that, (*c*) they are quite sure that that time of intervention is now not far off ; finally (*d*) the one thing which restrains the glorious future from bursting forth upon Israel, is its disobedience, its unfaithfulness to its part of the Covenant.

Let us look at these points more closely and in the order given above.

1. All the traditions of the Hebrews are unanimous that Israel and Yahweh are related to each other as people and God. The earliest strands of the Pentateuch point out that Yahweh called Abraham to make of his seed a great nation ;¹ Israel is Yahweh's son, His firstborn, or, in other words, no other race has any rights or privileges in Yahweh (Exod. iv 22). It is therefore a legitimate extension of this idea, when the Deuteronomists and later writers insist that the seed of Abraham was chosen by Yahweh 'to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth'.² Among the nations, Israel is Yahweh's as none other is. Accordingly, Israel was selected to be to Yahweh not

¹ Gen. xii 2 ; xiii 14-16 ; xv 5 ; xviii 18 ; xxii 17, 18.

² Deut. vii 6 ; cf. iv 19, 20, 37 ; x 15 ; xiv 2 ; 1 Kings iii 8 ; viii 53 ; Ps. cxxxv 4 ; cf. Exod. xix 5, 6 ; Ps. xxxiii 12 ; Jer. xxxii 20-2.

only a people, but also a name and a praise. 'As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith Yahweh; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; but they would not hear.'¹ As Israel was chosen to be to Him for a Name, so in the Deuteronomists' view, Jerusalem is chosen that Yahweh may place His name there;² and the Temple is sanctified for Yahweh's name, i.e. that Yahweh may manifest His presence there.³

(a) Since Israel is Yahweh's representative in the visible world, one is quite prepared to find that what He has done for His people in the past is sometimes ascribed to His jealousy for His own reputation or Name. This is explicitly stated by Ezekiel. In Egypt and in the wilderness Israel was time and again rebellious and would not hearken; 'then I said I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.'⁴ The same thought is expressed in other words in Deut. xxxii 26-7: 'I said, I would scatter them afar, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy, lest their adversaries should misdeem, lest they should say, Our hand is exalted, and Yahweh hath not done all this.'⁵

(b) The Hebrews were at all times sensitive to the opinions of their neighbours. They liked to think that other nations will call them blessed; they rage against those who rejoice at their misfortunes; and they picture to themselves what will be said among the heathen, when Yahweh inflicts punishment upon His people.⁶ And, again, in their prayers

¹ Jer. xiii 11; cf. Deut. xxvi 17-19; 2 Sam. vii 22-4=1 Chron. xvii 20-2; Isa. lxiii 12-14.

² Deut. xii 5; cf. Exod. xx 24.

³ 1 Kings iii 2; 2 Chron. vii 20; xx 9.

⁴ Ezek. xx 8, 9; cf. 13, 14, 22; Ps. cvi 8.

⁵ Cf. Mic. vii 10.

⁶ Cf. 1 Kings ix 8=2 Chron. vii 21; Mal. i 4, 5; iii 12.

for deliverance or forgiveness, they frequently plead what the heathen will say of Yahweh, if Israel should be destroyed. Thus in the Jehovistic narrative, when Yahweh proposes to consume Israel and make a great nation of Moses, 'Moses besought Yahweh his God and said, Yahweh, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.'¹ The thought that Yahweh's Name or reputation is at stake in Israel is constantly employed as a ground of intercession. 'Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, where is their God?' (Ps. lxxix 9, 10). 'We acknowledge, O Yahweh, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.'² Yahweh is 'he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins.'³

(c) And so also the mono-Yahwists are quite sure that because Israel is His people, Yahweh will not forsake them for His own sake and His Name's sake. 'Yahweh will not forsake His people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased Yahweh to make you a people unto himself.'⁴ Ezekiel is very deeply impressed with the fact that Yahweh's Name has been profaned among the heathen by Israel's exile, but he is equally sure that that Name will yet be sanctified in the sight of all men by the appearance of the Messianic Age. 'And when they came unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned my holy name; in that

¹ Exod. xxxii 11, 12; cf. Num. xiv 11-16; Deut. ix 28; Joel ii 17; 1 Kings viii 59, 60; 2 Kings xix 19.

² Jer. xiv 20, 21; cf. xiv 7; Joshua vii 9; Ps. lxxiv 19-22; Isa. lxiv 1, 2.

³ Isa. xliii 25; cf. Dan. ix 19.

⁴ 1 Sam. xii 22; 2 Kings xix 34; xx 6=Isa. xxxvii 35.

men said of them, These are the people of Yahweh, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Yahweh : I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned in the midst of them ; and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, saith the Lord Yahweh, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.' ¹ The day must dawn in which Yahweh will vindicate Himself and His choice of Israel ; and then Israel shall be to Him a name and a praise, and all men will acknowledge the majesty of Yahweh. ' And this city shall be to me for a name of joy, for a praise and for a glory, before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them, and shall fear and tremble for all the good and for all the peace that I procure unto it.' ²

2. There is also another ground on which confidence in the Messianic future is based. What Yahweh has begun, He will carry through to the end. Having begun with the choice of Israel, having pledged Himself by an oath to the patriarchs, by the solemn covenant on Sinai and by the promises vouchsafed to David, He will surely fulfil His word. The mono-Yahwists feel that over and over again in the past, it has been only His faithfulness to His oath, to His covenant and to His promise, that has saved Israel from destruction ; and they are confident that the same faithfulness may be relied on for the future.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the closeness of the tie which they believe binds Yahweh to Israel. Yahweh is Israel's father ; ³ and Israel is Yahweh's son. ⁴ Yahweh is Israel's maker and creator ; ⁵ and Israel is His vineyard,

¹ Ezek. xxxvi 20-3 ; cf. xx 39-44 ; Isa. lii 5, 6.

² Jer. xxxiii 9 ; cf. 24-6 ; Zeph. iii 19, 20 ; Isa. lv 12, 13 ; Ezek. xxxvii 27, 28 ; xxxix 7.

³ Deut. xxxii 6 ; Jer. iii 4, 19 ; xxxi 9 ; Isa. lxiii 16 ; lxiv 8 ; Mal. i 6, &c.

⁴ Exod. iv 22 ; Hos. xi 1 ; Jer. xxxi 9, 20, &c.

⁵ Isa. xliii 1 ; xlv 2, &c.

His inheritance :¹ Yahweh loves Israel with an everlasting love above all things.² The relationship between them is as that of husband and wife.³

(a) Yahweh called Abraham, and promised to make of his seed a great nation. In fulfilment of His oath to Abraham Yahweh blessed Isaac ;⁴ and in remembrance of His covenant with the Patriarchs, Yahweh delivered Israel from the bondage in Egypt ;⁵ gave them to inherit the land of Canaan ;⁶ delayed the destruction of the Northern Kingdom ;⁷ and gave His people power to accumulate wealth.⁸ The Mosaic Covenant in turn and the promise to David are offered as reasons why Yahweh showed mercy to a people so often in rebellion.⁹

(b) And so again, these great acts of Yahweh are frequently urged in prayer as a reason why He should deliver or forgive His people. When Yahweh proposes to destroy Israel, Moses intercedes : ‘ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And Yahweh repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people.’¹⁰ Solomon is represented as interceding for Israel, ‘ for they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron. . . . For thou didst separate them from among all the peoples of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord Yahweh.’¹¹ And there are again pleadings that Yahweh will keep the oath He swore to David : ‘ Lord, where are thy former

¹ Isa. v 1 ; Jer. xii 7, 10, &c.

² Isa. xliii 3, 4 ; xlix 15, 16 ; Jer. xxxi 3.

³ Jer. iii 20 ; Isa. liv 5 ; Hos. ii 2, &c.

⁴ Gen. xxvi 2-4, 24.

⁵ Exod. ii 24 ; vi 5 ; Deut. vii 8 ; Ps. cv 8-11, 42.

⁶ Exod. vi 4 ; Deut. ix 5.

⁷ 1 Kings xiii 23.

⁸ Deut. viii 18.

⁹ Isa. lxiii 11, 12 ; Ps. cxi 9 ; 2 Kings viii 19 = 2 Chron. xxi 7.

¹⁰ Exod. xxxii 13, 14 ; Deut. ix 26, 27 ; cf. Gen. xxxii 9.

¹¹ 1 Kings viii 51, 53 ; cf. Ps. lxxiv 2 ; lxxx 8-15 ; 2 Chron. xx 7.

mercies, which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness ? ' ¹

(c) And once more, the mono-Yahwists are quite sure that the future holds deliverance and mercy for Israel because of Yahweh's goodness to her in the past. ' He will turn again and have compassion upon us ; he will tread our iniquities under foot, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old ' (Mic. vii 19, 20). ' Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.' ² ' For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.' ³ Jeremiah finds it easier to think that heaven and earth should pass away, than that Israel should cease to be a nation before Yahweh for ever (xxxi 35-7), ' Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. . . . If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, so that there should not be day and night in their season ; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant. . . . Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which Yahweh did choose, he hath cast them off ? thus do they despise my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith Yahweh : If my covenant of day and night *stand* not, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth ; then will I also cast away the seed of Jacob, and of David my servant, so that I will not take of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; for I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them ' (Jer. xxxiii 14, 20, 21, 24-6). ' For this is *as* the waters of Noah unto me ; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke

¹ Ps. lxxxix 49 ; cf. 1 Kings viii 23-6.

² Ezek. xvi 60 ; cf. Deut. iv 30, 31 ; Hag. ii 4, 5 ; Ps. lxxiv 19, 20.

³ Isa. xxxvii 35 = 2 Kings xix 34 ; cf. xx 6 ; Ps. cxxxii 10, 11.

thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Yahweh that hath mercy on thee' (Isa. liv 9, 10; cf. li 1-3).

The prophecy of Amos is sometimes held up as an example of a stern denunciation which saw no hope whatever in the future, but only complete and irrevocable destruction. He is said to take his stand on the fact that Yahweh's relation to Israel is based on a voluntary agreement, not on an act of physical generation; Yahweh is therefore independent of His people and can cast them off completely (cf. Amos v 18-20; ix 1-4, 7). That it is absolutely impossible for Yahweh to cast off His people is not suggested by any prophet; but with the possible exception of Amos, they are all quite sure that Yahweh will never do so. The idea of the Covenant bond may make the thought of a permanent rejection conceivable; but the idea of Yahweh's mercy and truth, His loving-kindness to Israel and His faithfulness to that Covenant bond, make it impossible to believe that any withdrawal of His favour will be final and complete. And if the genuine work of Amos shows that he has no hope for the future, it should be remembered in the first place, that his despair is not occasioned by any doubts of Yahweh's willingness to pardon, but by his conviction that Israel will never repent (v 5, 14, 15); and, in the second place, this attitude of despair was in later times felt to be unworthy and to require correction. Hence the optimistic ending added to the book by other hands (ix 8-15).

(d) The one thing which restrains the inauguration of the Messianic Age is the sin and unfaithfulness of Israel. If only Israel were obedient and kept the covenant, how abundantly it would be blessed! 'Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the grains thereof: his name should not be cut off nor destroyed before me.'¹ And even now if Israel would repent, Yahweh would

¹ Isa. xlviii 18, 19; cf. Deut. vii 12-24; xxviii 1-14; xxxii 28-30; Ps. lxxxi 8-16; 1 Kings vi 11-13.

be merciful.¹ Every trouble, trial, and disaster, whether present or impending, is explained by the mono-Yahwists as a punishment for sin ; but when this period of correction and discipline is over ; when Israel has been taught her lesson and her stubborn pride and self-sufficiency are humbled ; then will break forth the glorious day of redemption and the fulfilment of the promises.² The great prophet of the Exile is fully persuaded that Israel has received of Yahweh's hand double for all her sins (Isa. xl 2), nothing remains now but to speak comfortably to her and to reassure her that the moment of glorious deliverance is at hand.

IV

In the Apocalyptic literature, which the two centuries immediately preceding the birth of Jesus produced in such abundance, the Messianic Hope reappears with many striking differences, it is true, but still also with the same essential fundamental facts as its basis. Chief among the changes is the thought that the new heaven and the new earth will not be an ideal consummation (*συντελεία*) of present conditions, but an entirely new mode of existence. The great act of intervention will involve something far more than a mere redistribution of political power ; in fact, nothing less than the destruction of the present organic conditions of life and an entirely new start in a new environment. The rise of individualism again is responsible for another sweeping change. The future concerns not the national life alone, but the life of the individual as well. A great and glorious future is in store for the nation ; and those who have been faithful on earth will not be robbed of their share in it by the fact of death. Sheol will be made to open her mouth and yield them up in order that they, too, may enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Age. There will, then, be a resurrection of the dead ; sometimes it is the righteous Israelites alone who rise : others believed that all

¹ Amos v 14, 15 ; Hos. x 12 ; Jer. xxvi 3, 13, 18, 19, &c.

² Hos. i-iii ; Isa. ix 1-7 ; x 24-7 ; xi 1-9 ; Jer. xxxi 31-4 ; xxxii 36-41 ; Obad. 15-21 ; Mal. iii 1-5 ; Ezek. xvi 59-63 ; Joel ii 12-32 ; iii 9-21.

Israel would rise ; and others that not Israel alone, but all mankind would be brought to life, and that then there would be a judgement in which the righteous would be distinguished from the wicked.

In spite of these differences, however, the essentials of the Hope remain the same. It is still the union of Israel and that Almighty Person, who, through all the ages, has been known as Israel's God ; it is still the vindication of Israel by the manifestation of the power of her God ; it is still the religion of Israel which is to be universal in the Messianic Age. Two points alone need to be emphasized for the purposes of this argument—the ultimate universality of the religion of Israel, and the persistence of the same basis for the Hope.

While there is the same unanimous belief in the Apocalypses as in the Old Testament that the religion of Israel alone can survive in the Messianic Age, there is also the same wide variation of opinion as to how this is to be brought about. Sometimes all the Gentiles are to be annihilated without more ado.¹ The Messiah is a warrior who slays them with the breath of his mouth.² When the Gentiles are wiped out of existence, the religion of Israel alone remains. But, according to other views, the Gentiles will not be entirely exterminated, and those who survive will voluntarily abandon their own gods as useless, and look to Jerusalem for religious truth and the service of the true God. In this case, the religion of Israel becomes universal by the conversion of all men to it. 'And all the heathen will revert to the truth and the fear of God, and will bury their idols ; and all the heathen will praise the Lord.'³ But though the Gentiles are converted, yet they are not admitted to the

¹ Eth. En. xci 9 ; 4 Ez. xiii 37, 38, 49.

² Eth. En. lxii 2-12 ; Pss. Sol. xvii 27 ; 4 Ez. xiii 38 ; cf. Eth. En. xc 18 ; Pss. Sol. xvii 25, 31, 32 ; 3 Sib. 653 f. ; 5 Sib. 108 f., 416-20 ; Apoc. Bar. xxxix 7-xl ; lxx 9 ; 4 Ez. xii 32 f. ; Slav. En. ii 2 ; cf. x 6 ; lxvi 1.

³ Tob. xiv 6 f. ; cf. xiii 11 f. ; Sib. iii 616 ff., 716 ff. ; Eth. En. x 21 ; xc 30 ; xci 14 ; Test. Jud. xxiv 6 ; T. Lev. ii 11 ; xiv 4 ; viii 14, iv 4 ; T. Sim. vi 5 ; T. Benj. x 5 ; T. Ash. vii 3 ; T. Naph. viii 3 ; Apoc. Bar. xiii 5-xiv 2 ; xli 4 ; lxxii 2-6 ; Eth. En. xlvi 4, 5 ; lxii 3, 6, 9 ; l 2-3 ; Pss. Sol. xvii 34, 38.

same level of privileges as the true-born Jew. The promises and the blessings are for the Jews first of all and are mediated, in a reduced degree, to the Gentiles through Israel. The Gentiles may be glad to be allowed to gird themselves and serve Israel, bringing the work of their hands for the upkeep of the temple and to enable the children of Israel to devote themselves in holiness and righteousness to the worship of God.¹

The grounds from which sprang the Messianic Hope are the same in the Apocalyptic as in the Biblical literature. The Jews continue to entertain this Hope, because they continue to believe that the Almighty God has in the past pledged His favour to Israel to the exclusion of other nations; that their religion alone can bring men to the living God, the Source of Life and Light. Of this the very existence itself of such a literature is a proof. The aim of these books is to solve a problem—a problem of no ordinary difficulty. If the Almighty is the God of Israel alone, how is it that His Saints are so cruelly maltreated while the godless sinners, who do not recognize the Law of God, whether of Gentile or Jewish blood, continue to triumph over them? To this problem the apocalyptic literature offered an answer which bade fair to be completely reassuring. Far back in the ancient history of the race, God revealed the course of all things to His chosen Saints, to Enoch, to the Patriarchs, to Moses, to Isaiah, to Baruch. Of that foreseen course of things, the present sufferings of Israel form a definite part; they are a just punishment for sin, and they are a prelude to the dawning of the great day of vindication. To this triumphant issue, this glorification of Israel, the whole course of history has been guided along paths foreseen and fore-ordained from the beginning, and specially revealed by God to the Hebrew Saints of old. The darker the present hour, the nearer and surer the day of redemption.

¹ Tob. xiii 11; Eth. En. i 3; xc 30; 3 Sib. 716–26, 772 ff.; Pss. Sol. xvii 32, 34. See Charles's notes on Apoc. Bar. lxxii 4–6; and in *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, pp. xcvii and 211, W. V. Hagne in *Journal of Theol. Studies*, October 1910, pp. 78 f.

The whole Hope for the future is thus built up upon belief in the exclusive privileges of the nation of Israel ; take from these writers this conviction, exchange it for the idea that all other religions are more or less on an equality with that of Israel in respect of truth and divine authority, and you at once reduce the Hebrews to the level of the polytheistic races which surrounded them ; their monotheism ceases to be, and their Messianic Hope vanishes into thin air. If other religions are true as well as Israel's, if other nations also are worshipping what is really and truly divine, then Yahweh is not the only God, then Israel is not the only people of the Living God, and her sufferings cease to be a problem of more special acuteness than the suffering of other people ; and consequently, there is no more reason to anticipate a future of glory for Israel than for any other nation. And so, if the conviction of Israel's exclusive privileges is withdrawn, all that is distinctive of the race fades out and becomes indistinguishable from the general monotony of its surroundings.

Nor are there wanting individual expressions in the Apocalyptic literature which confirm this general consideration. In the Book of Jubilees (c. 135 B.C.), for instance, Moses is represented as pleading, ' O Lord my God, do not forsake thy people and thy inheritance, so that they should wander in the error of their hearts, and do not deliver them into the hands of their enemies, the Gentiles, lest they should rule over them and cause them to sin against thee. But they are thy people and thy inheritance ; which thou hast delivered with thy great power from the hands of the Egyptians : create in them a clean heart and a holy spirit' (i 19-21). The reply is that they will sin and afterwards repent, and then God will ' cleanse them so that they shall not turn away from me from that day unto eternity. And their souls will cleave to me and to all my commandments, and I shall be their Father and they will be my children. And they will all be called the children of the Living God, every angel and every spirit will know, yea, they will know that these are my children, and that I am their Father in uprightness and

righteousness and that I love them'. 'And the Lord will appear to the eyes of all, and all will know that I am the God of Israel and the Father of all the children of Jacob, and king on Mount Zion for all eternity. And Zion and Jerusalem will be holy.'¹ Again, in the Psalms of Solomon (c. 53 B.C.) we find a pathetic appeal which could be paralleled more than once from the Old Testament. 'And now thou art our God and we are thy people whom thou hast loved; behold, and have pity, O God of Israel, for we are thine, and remove not thy mercy from us, that they set not upon us. For thou didst choose the seed of Abraham before all the nations, and didst set thy name upon us, O Lord; and thou wilt abide among us for ever. Of a truth thou didst covenant with our fathers concerning us; and in thee will we trust when our soul is turned unto thee. Let the mercy of the Lord be upon the house of Israel for everlasting and world without end.'² Or again, in the Assumption of Moses (A.D. 7-29), the tribes exiled in Babylon cry to God, saying: 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, remember thy covenant which thou didst make with them, and the oath which thou didst swear unto them by thyself, that their seed should never fail in the land which thou hast given them' (iii 9). 'Lord of all, King on the lofty throne, who rulest the world, and didst will that this people should be thine elect people, then (indeed) thou didst will that thou shouldest be called their God, according to the covenant which thou didst make with their fathers' (iv 2). 'Then God will remember them on account of the covenant which he made with their fathers, and he will manifest his compassion in those times also.'³

Finally, to take one more example, from a still later book, the Apocalypse of Baruch (Source B¹ after A.D. 70), 'If thou destroyest thy city, and deliverest up thy land to those that hate us, how shall the name of Israel be again remembered? Or how shall one speak of thy praises? or to whom shall that which is in thy law be explained? Or shall the world return to its nature (of aforetime) and the

¹ i 23-5, 28, tr. Charles.

² Pss. Sol. ix 16-20, tr. Ryle and James.

³ iv 5, tr. Charles.

age revert to primeval silence? And shall the multitude of souls be taken away, and the nature of man not again be named? And where is all that which thou didst say to Moses concerning us? ' ¹

V

The Messianic Hope, then, is based upon this fundamental principle of mono-Yahwism, that the God who is known as Israel's God, the author of Israel's religious organization, is the only God, omnipotent and absolutely supreme. Consequently the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of that Hope becomes a test of the truth or falsity of mono-Yahwism. To imagine that this insignificant little people had greater religious privileges than any other race, must have seemed to the polytheists to be nothing short of absurd. What overwhelming conceit, what groundless vanity that these people should think that their national God was more powerful, or more truly God, than the deities of Assyria and Babylonia! Did not every stubborn fact of international politics prove that the Chaldaean gods were stronger than Yahweh? To assert, then, that the God of Israel was the only God, sole arbiter of the destinies of nations and supreme sovereign of the universe was mere madness. But the mono-Yahwists were not dismayed by any considerations such as these. That Israel's God is the only God was not, they knew, in their day, borne out by visible facts; but the time was not far off when the God of Israel would arise to vindicate Himself and His choice of Israel in a way which would make it patent to all, that there is no other God but He. Because this great Almighty God had chosen to place the knowledge of Himself in Israel alone, because He is Himself the author and creator of Israel's religion and the object of its national worship, therefore He will appear to make

¹ iii 5-9, tr. Charles; cf. also Pss. Sol. vii; xi 9; xii 8; xiv 3; xvii 5; Assump. Mos. i 12-17; Apoc. Bar. v 1-3 [Source B¹]; xlviii 19-24 [Source B²]; lxxxv 3-5 [Source B³]; Ben. Sir xxxvi 8-17; xlv 19-23; Jubilees ii 19-21; xii 22-4; xv 3-10, 19-21; xvi 17, 18; xvii 15, 16; xix 17-29; xxii 6-15, 24, 28-30; xxxiii 19, 20; Tests. Twelve Patriarchs, Jud. xxii 3.

Himself known to all as the God of Israel ; and this manifestation will take place through the national religious system of Israel.

If the mono-Yahwists misrepresented the Almighty in claiming such a unique position for Israel, one would not expect that this Hope of a future intervention for Israel would do otherwise than disappear without the occurrence of any event which could possibly claim to have been sent by God as its fulfilment or realization. If, on the other hand, we suppose the mono-Yahwists to have been right, their idea that God would one day make a fuller revelation of Himself and His will to all mankind through the religious system which He chose in the past, is in accordance with what, so far as our faculties can judge, a God of Love might be expected to do.

What, then, of the fulfilment of the Messianic Hope ? As we turn back the pages of history do we find any movement arising among the Jews, or are there any phenomena in Jewish religious history, which could claim to be an answer to this Hope ? Has this ancient religion given birth to any new force, to any new truth, to any new factor of progress, so worthy to have come from God as to make us feel that this was God's answer to the great doctrines and high expectations of the mono-Yahwists ? Has God given a further manifestation of Himself through the Jewish religion ?

It will not be easy for any one who believes in God and His love for men to answer these questions in the negative.

The facts with which we have to deal are these. Jesus of Nazareth appeared upon the stage of history as a member of the Jewish race ; He worshipped in the temple ; used the Hebrew Scriptures as divine ; called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, His Father ; and claimed to be the fulfilment of the Messianic Hope, and to introduce the realization of that which had been promised to the Patriarchs. Even if we do not rise above the standard of what is called 'reduced' Christianity, we must see in Jesus not only one who knew God as none other did, but one who brought a message from God, who did reveal God to us. It will be

seen presently that Jesus Himself was a mono-Yahwist ; and Jesus and the prophets form a combination which is not easily withstood. The prophets alone exhibit phenomena worthy of a divine revelation ; Jesus, on the lowest estimate of His Person, taught the truth about God ; and each bears witness to the other. The prophets look to God to send a revelation of Himself through their religion ; Jesus, who bore a vital organic relation to that religion, brought a revelation, and pointed men back to the prophets to find the proof of His own divine mission. Surely one could scarcely imagine a more convincing vindication of mono-Yahwism.

The tendency of the present day is not to deny that in Jesus there is in some degree a manifestation of God, but to minimize His connexion with the Jewish religion. Emphasis is laid upon the many points in which His teaching contrasts with the doctrines of Judaism and His fulfilment with their expectations. The fact is that He and His work so far transcend all the brightest expectations of the Jews, and are so much more worthy of God according to our ideas of Him than anything they looked forward to, that to many of us they appear to stand in a relation of opposition to Jewish national Hopes, rather than in one of fulfilment. And this is especially the case with that particular doctrine of mono-Yahwism which has been emphasized in these pages more than once—the exclusive privileges of the Jews. The liberalism of Jesus is placed in opposition to the particularism of Judaism, and it is often made to appear that it is just from a narrowness of this type that He was most anxious to deliver men. Hence to many it would seem impossible to claim His authority for a limitation of religious privilege to the Jews.

This is not the place for a full discussion of these questions. But it may be briefly pointed out here that He differed from the Jews because, like the prophets before Him, He had a higher, purer, and more worthy conception of their national God. Instead of bloodshed and conquest, He offered the Cross as the exhibition of the purpose and character of God ; instead of stern and strict retribution He proclaimed the

Fatherhood of God. He differed from them not because He preached a God other than Him whom they worshipped as their national God, but because He knew that national God better than they did. And again, while He taught the universal love of God, His work did not result in a composite religion made by equating all existing cults. He accepted the Jewish belief that they knew the true God, and He never said that any other religion could bring men to the truth. His work as Messiah was to reorganize the Jewish religion, to reconstitute it upon a new basis in such a way that all the privileges of the Old Covenant, and more than they, were thrown open to the Gentiles, i.e. the uncircumcised, on precisely the same terms and in precisely the same degree, as to the circumcised Jew. And nothing surprised the believing Jews more than the discovery of the fact that, in the post-Messianic Israel, 'the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise with themselves' (Eph. iii 6). If anything is needed to show the providential guidance of the whole course of this ancient religion, it will be found in the way in which its privileges, once confined to the circumcised descendants of Abraham, were, by Jesus the Messiah, opened out to all mankind with equal opportunities for all. But of this more will be said below.

Again, although the belief that the national God of the Hebrews would one day be the only God recognized among men, must have appeared to the polytheists to be the most unreasonable vanity, yet that belief has received a fulfilment, which, though as yet it is partial only, is still such as to arrest attention and afford food for reflection. As will be seen more clearly below the religion of the Jews underwent a reorganization; and this reorganized religion claimed to be the true Israel, to be heir to all the privileges and promises given to the Hebrew fathers; moreover, it is slowly but surely making its way over all the world. The gods of mighty Babylon and ancient Egypt are dead; never again will human hearts thrill at the sound of their names, nor will human lips be found to speak their praises; their ritual has ceased and their cult is dead; we know of

them only because the antiquarian digs up their images long buried in the sands of Egypt or deciphers their names on the rocks and sun-dried bricks of Arabia. All that remains of them are those few traces which the ravages of time and weather have not availed to destroy. Every record that was written on anything less dead, or more sensitive than rock and hardened clay, together with every affectionate memory in the human heart, has long since perished. But how strangely different is the way in which history has dealt with the Hebrew religion ! For centuries, its claim to have been the sole true religion of ancient times, the sole depository of the knowledge of the true God, has been sustained by men of no mean intellectual power. Its ancient scriptures have been hailed as the Word of God by generation after generation ; they are now known the world over, and are read in the language of every civilized nation. The psalms and hymns composed in honour of the national God of the Hebrews, which once resounded through the Temple Courts at Jerusalem in the midst of a stately Eastern ritual, are still in daily use amongst the most treasured possessions of numbers of minds which are as highly enlightened as they are deeply religious. Our interest in the Hebrew religion is not merely that of the antiquarian ; the Church of Jesus the Messiah still worships the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's anointed representative taught men to call Him ' Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ', and under this divine Name, He is still the object of our heart's devotion.

On these broad lines the Hopes of the mono-Yahwists have received a fulfilment which is as undeniable as it is astonishing. The claim of the mono-Yahwists that Israel had received an exclusive revelation from God Almighty has been vindicated and confirmed by the facts of history.

CHAPTER VIII

JESUS AND THE RELIGION OF THE JEWS

THAT Jesus came to free and did free men from the fetters of the Jewish Law is one of the commonplaces of all the Lives of Christ. Moreover, it is undeniable that, as the result of His work, there was initiated a great religious movement which was characterized by a refusal to recognize either the Law or Jewish extraction as essential to divine sonship. This fact, then, may be taken as the starting-point of any discussion of Jesus' attitude towards the religion of the Jews ; it was He who stripped religion of its national setting, delivered men from the burden of the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law, and set before the world the grand ideal of the universal brotherhood of man in the universal Fatherhood of God. Accepting this as a fact which cannot be denied, the present chapter endeavours to define it more clearly and to determine in what sense it is true that Jesus freed men from the Law, i.e. by what process He accomplished this deliverance.

But before we can understand how Jesus freed men from the Law, we must first understand in what sense they were bound to it. Now there are two conceptions of divine revelation which, for our purposes, it is very necessary to distinguish from each other. (1) According to one idea, revelation is a gift sent down from Heaven, a deposit once committed to the saints, a thing which men did not find out for themselves ; it came to them from no earthly source ; it was prepared in heaven and transmitted thence to man by God Himself. A revelation of this kind must be for all who believe in it, not only infallible, and therefore not open to correction or alteration from any human source, but also authoritative and obligatory, i.e. acceptance of and obedience to it must be essential to God's favour.

(2) According to the other idea, revelation is not a deposit communicated to man from the outside ; it is something which he gathers from the world in which he lives and from his experience of life. God is immanent in all things and in all men, and that which is best, truest, and highest in human experience, and especially in religion, may be said to be inspired by God, since it argues a freer self-expression of the immanent divine Spirit. According to this view, revelation is a thing which grows with human knowledge and experience. It is in no sense infallible or authoritative ; for we must always be ready to yield up what we hold to-day if to-morrow shows us something better ; by its very nature it is always open to enlargement, correction, and alteration from human sources, because it is every man's right, or rather his duty, to criticize and improve upon it, and to call on others to abandon what he believes to be its imperfections and to accept anything that he can show to be better.

These are two sharply contrasted conceptions of revelation. It is not, of course, at all impossible that the same mind should believe that both are channels of truth ; for it may be argued that, since there is but one God who is the author of both, there can be no ultimate contradiction between them. And many of us do combine them together in some proportion or other in building up our faith.

But although we moderns may and do combine the two, yet there can be no doubt whatever that the Jews among whom our Lord lived and taught had no conception of revelation except the first ; and to them the whole system of the Jewish religion was of permanent divine obligation because it had been supernaturally committed by God to Moses.

‘ The whole Pentateuch was thus now regarded as dictated by God, as prompted by the Spirit of God. . . . Nay, at last, the view of a divine dictation was no longer sufficient. The complete book of the law was declared to have been handed to Moses by God, and it was only disputed whether God delivered the whole Torah to Moses at once or by volumes.’¹

¹ Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, ii 1. 30 ; cf. Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 70-90.

Accordingly, where this view of revelation was held, we are prepared to find ' that the law, which regulated not only the priestly service but the whole life of the people in their religious, moral, and social relations, was acknowledged as given by God Himself. Its every requirement was a requirement of God from His people, its most scrupulous observance was therefore a religious duty, nay, the supreme and, in truth, the sole religious duty. The whole piety of the Israelite consisted in obeying with fear and trembling, with all the zeal of an anxious conscience the law given him by God in all its particulars '.¹

Now if Jesus freed men from the bondage of the Jewish law, the men He freed were the Jews who held these beliefs, for they were the only people who thought themselves to be bound by it. Hence, as was stated above, two ways are conceivable in which He could have accomplished this deliverance. (1) He might have freed them by opening their eyes to the fact that they never had been bound, by proving to them that in reality the Law had never been obligatory because it had not been miraculously given by God Himself. In this case we must suppose that, however skilfully its intention was concealed, yet a large part of His teaching was in reality a polemic directed against the most cherished convictions of His contemporaries. A deliverance in this sense implies a deliberate rejection by Jesus of the alleged authority and obligation of the Mosaic Law. (2) The other sense in which Jesus may conceivably have freed men from the Law implies that He believed in its supernatural origin and authority ; it also implies a claim on His part to possess a supernatural authority equal to that which originally promulgated the Law ; finally, it implies that, by the exercise of this authority, Jesus repealed or invalidated the Mosaic Law, revealed the will of God afresh, and gave a supernatural sanction to a new mode of approach to God, to a new set of relations between God and man, which henceforth are clothed with all that obligatory character which had once belonged to the Mosaic system.

Let us observe that these are the only two alternatives

¹ Schürer, *ibid.*, p. 306.

before us. The Mosaic system either had or had not a unique divine sanction and authority behind it. Here is a dichotomy which is exhaustive ; there can be no third class between the two. One may think that the Jewish Law was divine, that it was the highest, the best, and the truest that had been known up to that time ; but to stop here is to put it in the class of things which are not supernaturally and immediately revealed ; the dividing line is not crossed until we go on to say that the Mosaic Law was directly given or authorized by God. To those who put it in the class of things supernaturally revealed, it is an entirely different thing from what it is to those who put it in the class of things not so revealed. To the former, it is authoritative and obligatory and cannot be set aside by human authority ; it is also infallible and not open to correction or criticism : to the latter, it may be divine, but it is not obligatory in the sense of being essential to salvation, nor is it infallible. If, then, Jesus shared the common Jewish belief that the Law was an immediate revelation, He could not have undertaken to set men free from it, unless He felt Himself to be equipped with the same supernatural authority which originally promulgated it ; for no mere private individual could undertake to deliver men from that which he believed to be the direct command of God : such a deliverance would be no deliverance at all, but mere blasphemy. If, on the other hand, Jesus altogether denied the supernatural and obligatory character of the Law, one can quite understand how He might have sought, without any consciousness of special authority in Himself, to disabuse the minds of His countrymen of their inherited traditions regarding Moses and the Law. We have, then, to choose between two alternatives ; Jesus regarded the Mosaic system either as an obligatory and supernatural revelation, or as one which was neither authoritative nor obligatory. If He believed that there was any direct divine authorization behind the Mosaic system, then He must have claimed that there was the same authority behind the freedom wherewith He made men free ; if He believed that the Mosaic Law could claim no such authority, then, so far as this point is concerned, there is no

need to assume any sense of supernatural authority in the consciousness of Jesus.

Which of these two alternatives, then, should be adopted? There are three fields from which evidence may be brought to bear upon this question: (1) the historical and religious conditions of His day; (2) the testimony of the Gospels; (3) the course of Apostolic history.

II

Let us begin, then, with a brief review of the main factors in the religious thought and life of the first century of our era. It was, in the first place, an age of almost universal toleration among religions. The old traditional exclusiveness of tribe and nation had been for some time in process of breaking down. Hand in hand with the Greek language and Greek habits of life, there had gone through the civilized world the disintegrating influence of Greek philosophical thought and the worship of the Greek gods. And after the Greek gods came the universal cult of the Roman Caesars. The worship of a new god involved no apostasy from the old; the new deities were either identified with the old or worshipped alongside them. The official worship of the Roman Empire was frankly polytheistic, and the 'mystery' religions, which at this time were beginning to press forward from East to West, were henotheistic rather than monotheistic.¹

One must not suppose that a belief in one Almighty God formed the substratum of the religious life of that day as it does now. At the present moment every religious-minded man feels that there is but one God whom he can worship; he does not imagine that he can make a choice between this God or that; he will either worship or he will not; but if he does, he knows that there is but one living God whom he can worship. Consequently the one thing in a man's religious life for which neither he himself nor any one else feels it necessary to seek an explanation is why he does not worship more than one God. We may ask on what grounds he

¹ Cf. below, p. 224.

justifies his belief that the world is not mere matter ; or why he thinks it is possible for him to know the infinite Spirit ; or why he seeks fellowship with the divine ; but when we find that he is religious, we never ask him to explain why he does not worship more than one God. Every intelligent person who practises religion at all may be assumed to be a monotheist ; and monotheists differ according to the outward forms in which their religion manifests itself ; for monotheism may be associated with almost any attitude toward externals.

But when we go back to the first century of the Christian era we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere, and one in which the divine unity was not a postulate of the religious life. The popular religion was still a form of polytheism. If any one of that day was sincerely religious, and yet believed in one God only, there must have been at work in his mind some special influence which caused him to differ from the traditional inherited beliefs of the mass of mankind. Hence the point which calls most loudly for explanation in the case of any monotheist of the first century is, why did he not worship more than one God ?

Now the monotheists of that day were divided into two classes—those who came under the influence of Greek philosophy, and those who belonged to the Jewish religion. These two classes ought not to be contrasted with each other as two schools of thought ; they differed far more profoundly than that. They were rather two different worlds, each of which had its own characteristic mental atmosphere, its own historical antecedents, and its own attitude towards the outward manifestations of religion. In origin and development each was wholly independent of the other. It is true that they did meet and mingle in the first century of our era ; but this was at Alexandria ; the monotheism of the Palestinian Jews, with which we have now to deal, owed nothing to philosophical thought.

Let us try, then, to bring out the contrast briefly and clearly. The Greek monotheist did not rest his belief on tradition or on authority, but on reason and reflection, on a certain interpretation of the facts of existence. If he felt

that there was but one God, this was not because any of the traditional religions with which he was familiar told him so, but because he found nature to be eloquent of such a Being ; because he could not explain things without recourse to such an hypothesis. What he knew of God—or should we say, what he knew could not be known of God ?—was mediated to him through nature and his experience of life. He knew no revelation which had been sent down as a gift from heaven.

To all this the monotheism of the Jew stands in profoundest contrast. His knowledge of God rested on authority and tradition, and was mediated to him through the Scriptures and the entire religious organization of his race. The Hebrew was scarcely conscious of even the existence of those problems which led the philosopher to his belief in one God. That a belief in one righteous God provided an answer to the riddle of existence was not for him a matter of vital moment. Such considerations lay outside the purview of his thoughts ; like the polytheist, he lived his life undisturbed by any metaphysical questionings as to the meaning of existence and the reality which lies behind phenomena. All he knew was that the sacred time-honoured Scriptures and traditions of his race, for which his fathers had fought and died on many a bloody field, told him of one Almighty God ; and on that he was quite content to rest. To go behind or beyond the Scriptures to some other authority was impossible, for they were verbally inspired by God. Not human productions these, but divine ; for though the hands which wrote were human, the mind which composed the message and directed the muscular movements was not that of man, but of God, whose Spirit took the place of the human consciousness in controlling the organism at the moment of writing.¹ The Jew was born into this inherited belief, as he was born into a certain society of men, and experienced no need of further inquiry or proof.

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of this difference. It implies an entirely different conception of God's relation to man and of His method of revelation.

¹ Cf. Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 70-90.

According to the Jew God had certain purposes to accomplish in the creation of the world ; and He selected a certain race to be the means of carrying out these purposes ; to them alone He revealed Himself and His holy moral Law ; according to the Jew, revelation is something sent down direct from heaven ; a faith once for all delivered to the Saints, a deposit of divine knowledge supernaturally communicated and therefore in itself independent of human errors and infirmities. According to the Greek, on the other hand, revelation, if one may call it such, originated not with God, but with men. What the philosopher knew of God, he had won for himself, had wrested from the world by prying into the secrets and mysteries of existence, and since it is thus so completely the work of his own brain, it is subject to all the limitations and infirmities which attend man's efforts, and is always open to improvement as wider observation and more correct reasoning are brought to bear upon it. For the philosopher, belief in the exclusive choice of one race or in a supernatural revelation was excluded ; not thus was God related to men ; men were but a part of creation, finite and imperfect ; it was hardly possible to think that God experienced any special interest in man as such, and certainly not in any one group or race of men to the exclusion of others.

And there is yet another point of contrast : philosophical monotheism, being independent of religious institutions in its origin, does not recognize any one religious organization as having privileges or authority which are not shared by all others ; it may apply a moral test to the traditional institutions of religion ; but it takes up the same attitude towards the outward organized aspect of all religions ; they are all alike either profitable or unprofitable according to the point of view adopted. It may be that all alike are useless, that the only way to serve God is to do one's duty by living according to nature ; but if there is any value at all in these outward forms, it is certain that no one of them has a monopoly of that value. There is but one God, who makes no distinctions between men as such, and who therefore is not limited to any one religion or any one set of externals. If anything is to be gained by outward forms, let each man

follow the customs prescribed by the state, whatever they may be.

To all this again the Hebrew monotheism stands as the very antithesis ; and that because of its very nature and origin. Just as the attitude of the Greek towards externals was the logical outcome of the fact that his knowledge of God was mediated entirely apart from any external system of religion ; so the attitude of the Hebrew was the necessary consequence of the fact that he knew the one true God only because God had intervened from heaven to reveal Himself and His will to the forefathers of the Jewish nation. The very authority which told him that there is but one Holy God, also assured him that that God had made a distinction between his race and all the rest of mankind by choosing them alone to stand towards Him in the relation of a 'people', by appointing for them that system of religion which they endeavoured to practise, and by causing men to record His will in those sacred and infallible Scriptures of which his race was both possessor and guardian. It was therefore quite impossible for the Jew to regard any other system of religion as in any sense on the same level with his own. Let him admit that any other religion could be placed beside his own, and he thereby admitted that to worship the one true God was little better than to worship idols or demons. The Jew, therefore, was only logical and consistent when he held that, apart from the Jewish Law, there was no revelation and no service of God : that, apart from the Jewish religious fellowship, there was no salvation ; that the rest of mankind, the Gentiles, sat in darkness, 'alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.'

Was it possible that two systems so entirely opposed to each other could be held by the same mind at the same time? An attempt to relate and interpret them to each other was made at Alexandria in Egypt, and the result is the curious work of Philo Judaeus. Philo was at once a philosopher and a Jew ; and though he held that the Jews had unique privileges, yet he accommodated his Judaism to

philosophy in such a way as almost to deny those privileges. He approached the Old Testament with the philosophy of Plato in his hand, and showed that the Platonic system was present in the Pentateuch long before Plato. So true was this that the Greek philosophers were mere copyists of the Jewish Scriptures, and, though the phrase is not Philo's, Plato was Moses speaking in Attic Greek. The Jews have all along had the best philosophical system, and in this consists the special privileges given to them and not to others. Well may one open one's eyes at this astonishing performance and ask how this feat is done, how Plato is extracted from Moses and how all the primitive Semitic ideas in the Jewish Scriptures are exorcised out of the way ! It is a simple matter when the magic means of allegory are at hand ; for allegorization was a convenient method of interpretation by which anything whatever can be made to prove anything one likes.¹

A word must also be said about the Eastern mystery-religions which have already been mentioned above. From one point of view these religions were henotheistic, for each of them was devoted to one god and one god only, to Isis, Cybele, Mithras, Dea Syra, or Aesculapius. It seems, however, that many persons were initiated into more than one of these cults with the idea that all reached the same end, and that the particular god worshipped was but the impersonation of the one godhead who was behind them all. To this extent there is some indication of a monotheistic belief among the votaries of these cults. But it should be observed that these religions were religions of salvation, i.e. they professed to provide a means for delivering the soul from the flesh, the world, and death ; they were not concerned to think out the relation of the god worshipped to the universe and to other objects of worship. Consequently such monotheism as there was about them did not lie in any official creed, but rather in the opinions held by particular devotees. And the monotheistic views of these individuals must be traced back to the influence of Greek philosophical thought.²

¹ Cf. Schürer II iii 366 ff.

² Cf. Lindsay, in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, i 89-92 ; Harnack,

These, then, were the chief religious conditions of the world at the time when Jesus lived ; a background of polytheism and two types of monotheism, which were the very antithesis of each other in their ideas of the method of divine revelation, and in the attitude they took up towards the organized religions of the day ; and though they mingled at Alexandria at the beginning of our era, yet they were in origin and history entirely independent of each other.

Bearing these conditions in mind, then, we have to ask ourselves which alternative is more probable ; did Jesus free men from the Law by teaching that it never had had a right to be considered obligatory ? or did He believe it to be of supernatural origin and set men free from it by claiming supernatural authority to release them from the obligation to observe it ?

Now the most obvious facts about the life of Jesus are that He lived and died a Jew of Palestine in the first century of our era ; and so far as we know, His travels beyond Palestine, with the exception of the flight into Egypt during His infancy, were confined to two short journeys across the northern borders of Galilee. Moreover, without pressing now the details of the evidence, we may surely accept these broad facts of the Gospel story—that He was brought up in a devout Jewish home at Nazareth, where He worked as a carpenter ; that His friends and chosen disciples were Jews of no special learning or ability ; that He attended the synagogue services where the Law was read, and, on occasions at least, the national festivals celebrated in Jerusalem. In the case of any other monotheist born and bred under such conditions as these, we would have no doubt whatever as to his religious beliefs ; we would without hesitation set him down as a strict Jew, sharing in all the cherished convictions of the Jews regarding the unique divine origin and obligatory character of the Mosaic religion.

Moreover, it is a well-known fact that the Jews were looking forward to a new revelation of God's will and a fresh manifestation of His power ; some of the ancient prophets

Mission and Expansion of Christianity, i 24-35 ; and *History of Dogma*, i 116-21 ; Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Dogmengesch.* p. 66.

had foretold the approach of a time when Yahweh would abolish the old and make a new Covenant with His people ; and many expected that these things would be brought about by a supernaturally authorized or anointed representative to be known as Messiah. In view of these facts, then, it cannot be claimed that the theory which makes Jesus accept the cherished and inherited beliefs of His compatriots, and at the same time claim to possess authority to supersede the Mosaic Law, is at all out of harmony with the religious and historical facts of His place and time. Whatever difficulties it may present to the metaphysician, no exception can be taken to it on the ground that it is historically impossible. It is possible to maintain that, if Jesus made this claim, He was mistaken ; but it cannot be maintained that such a claim could not have been made by a truly religious Jew at the time He lived.

On the other hand, the theory which presents Jesus as denying the unique authority and divine origin of the Jewish religion may be much more easily squared with certain systems of metaphysics, but it involves very serious historical difficulties. A denial of this kind is not, of course, impossible or inconceivable, but it at once lifts Him out of the rut of ordinary Jews and places Him upon a pinnacle by Himself quite as successfully as a claim to supernatural authority.

Let us look at this point a little more closely. It can hardly be doubted that Jesus was born into an atmosphere of unquestioned belief in the supernatural authority of the Jewish religion, and that He was brought up to accept the claim to a unique revelation made by the Jews. If, then, He abandoned this belief, He must have come to see that the origin of the Law was not from above, but from earth itself ; that it had no guarantee or sanction other than that which the best of men could give it. Now it must be remembered that the sole reason which the Jews had for believing in one Holy God was that He had revealed Himself directly from heaven to Moses and the prophets ; the Jews possessed no reasoned argument to prove that there is but one Holy God ; the Scriptures and the traditions of the race were themselves the only evidence of His existence ; hence, if it

had been proved to a Jew that they were not directly revealed from heaven at all, all reason for his belief in such a God would have disappeared. Any one who could prove that the Mosaic system was not supernaturally revealed would thereby bring the whole Jewish system of monotheism toppling to the ground.

Any Jew, then, who denied the heavenly origin of the Jewish religion would have three alternatives open to him. He might lapse into polytheism or into one of the mystery-religions ; or, he might abandon all religious belief for either materialism or a profound scepticism ; or, he might come to believe, on grounds other than those of a supernatural revelation to the Jews, in the existence of one Holy Almighty God. If, then, Jesus abandoned a belief in the supernatural authority of Mosaism, His belief in one God must have had some grounds other than the Jewish Scriptures ; He must have come to see that there is some other source from which the knowledge of God may be derived ; He must have adopted some idea of revelation other than the Jewish. What other conception of revelation, what other source of the knowledge of one Almighty God is there ? Only the philosophical. We must suppose, then, that philosophical considerations and modes of thought had so profoundly influenced His mind that they caused Him first to abandon the unquestioned beliefs of His contemporaries, which He had breathed in with every breath since His boyhood, and then to substitute for them conceptions of a very different character as the basis of His religious life.

But is there any evidence of such influence ? Is the presence of such an influence at all possible ? One would have to ask in the first place, from what source did it come to bear upon the life and thoughts of Jesus ? No doubt the Greek language was spoken in Palestine, Greek names were not uncommon, and Greek ideas and habits of life were not entirely unknown ; but these do not, of course, amount to anything like the powerful influence which the theory under consideration requires.¹ There is no evidence that the class of Jewish society in which Jesus was brought up

¹ Cf. Schürer, II i 11-51.

was at all penetrated by any ray of philosophical learning. No one is likely to suggest that He was really a self-originated Plato or Aristotle. Yet the assumption that He borrowed ideas from the philosophical schools is as wholly fictitious as the complicity with the Essenes by means of which some early critical editions of the Life of Jesus sought to explain away His miracles. It is wholly without support from any tradition, however late in date ; there is nothing in the Gospels to suggest that His belief in God came to Him as the answer to the riddle of existence, nor is there any reason to think that metaphysical problems at any time occupied His thoughts. And probably most of us will agree that of the things which distinguished Him from His contemporaries, the possession of philosophical learning was certainly not one.¹ How is it, one must ask, that all the Christian traditions represent Him as innocent of any acquaintance with philosophical problems and teachings ? And again, how is it that the storm and stress of mind, the questionings and doubts, which must have been involved in shifting the basis of His belief from the Scriptures to a philosophical conception of the world—how is it that all this inner struggle has left no trace behind it on the pages of the Gospels ? According to this view, the religious faith of Jesus was broken off short and then began again on a new basis ; but, according to all that has come down to us concerning Him, His faith in one Almighty God flowed on undisturbed and unshaken by any doubts or misgivings.

But still the line which will perhaps suggest itself to some minds as most reasonable at this point is to argue that, in some way, we know not how, these influences did come to act upon Him, as they did upon Philo ; and that, like Philo, He in some way accommodated His Judaism, without abandoning it altogether, to the more liberal spirit of philosophy. Hence His apparent acceptance, but real rejection, of the exclusive claims of the Jews. But the comparison with Philo is exceedingly unfortunate. Philo lived at Alexandria, where he could scarcely fail to come in contact with philosophy ; Jesus lived in Palestine in a social circle

¹ Cf. Harnack, *What is Christianity ?* pp. 36 f.

which it is most unlikely had any intimate knowledge of the works and thoughts of Plato or Aristotle. Philo made it his main effort to interpret Judaism to the Greeks and the philosophy of the Greeks to the Jews ; but nothing we know of Jesus suggests that He was conscious of any source of monotheistic doctrine except the Jewish Scriptures, nor have we any right to think that He attempted a similar interpretation. Again, Philo would have been helpless without the allegorical method, but, so far as we know, Jesus never used it. And, finally, Philo said the Jewish Law ought to be observed ;¹ but Jesus, we are told, denied the obligation of the Jewish Law and freed men from the burden of it altogether. There were other Jewish philosophers, it is true, who did not insist upon the literal outer observance of the Law ; but that was because they explained away the legal enactments by their allegorical methods.²

If any one maintains that there was in the mystery-religions a stronger tendency towards monotheism than has been allowed to them in these pages, he will not find it easy to prove a contact between them and either Jesus or His Apostles. Moreover, it is scarcely conceivable that they should have been able to supply an assured belief in one Holy and Almighty Father to one who had seen reason to abandon the Jewish monotheism.

Those, then, who maintain that Jesus denied the supernatural origin of the Law must be asked to explain, (1) why He abandoned this belief, and from what source, when He had once abandoned it, He drew His belief in one God ; and (2) why there is no trace in Christian tradition of the inner struggle and the period of uncertainty which this theory involves.

III

We may now pass on to examine the testimony of the Gospels. The attitude of our Lord towards the religion of the Jews, as the Synoptic Gospels describe it, may be summed up in the following statements : (1) The Jewish Scriptures

¹ Schürer, II iii 369, n. 124.

² Cf. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, i 108 n. 1.

are His treasury of the knowledge of God, the source-book of His theology. (2) He declined to observe the Tradition of the Elders and denounced the Scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites, but the Mosaic Law itself He regarded as a divine appointment, and therefore both observed it Himself and taught others to do likewise. (3) He recognized that the Jews had privileges not given to others, and corresponding responsibilities for which others were not answerable. (4) But the Law was preparatory, incomplete, and temporary. The whole system of the ancient Covenant looked forward to and promised something better which was to take its place. That something was nothing less than a new Covenant which He Himself inaugurated. As Messiah He was conscious that He had authority from God to bring the Mosaic Covenant to its intended close, and, like a new Moses, to inaugurate and give validity to a new Covenant between God and His people Israel. The new Covenant came into effect and was ratified through His Blood. Under the new Covenant it was His death, not the observance of the Mosaic Law, but the sacrifice He offered on Calvary, which was efficacious unto the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. The basis of salvation was shifted, as it were, from the Law to a personal appropriation of the merits of His Cross and Passion. The effect of this was to make the observance of the Mosaic Law no longer necessary to salvation. But if it is no longer essential to salvation, it is bound to lose its original importance, and in the course of time, to sink into insignificance. And again, once it is removed, then the way is open for Gentiles to enter in upon the Messianic salvation on precisely the same terms as the Jews. Thus the Gentiles are freed from the burden of the Law, and hence the universalism of Christianity.

Let us take up first His attitude towards the Scriptures. The point of real importance is not merely that He was thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures, nor even that He accepted the traditions regarding the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Davidic authorship of the Psalter, and the historical genuineness of the Old Testament narratives ; but that He constantly used the Scriptures as the final court

of appeal in matters of faith and practice. He finds in them a treasury of the knowledge of God and a source-book on the duty of man. To the suggestions of the tempter He replies in words from the Old Testament: 'It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' There is more in this than a mere reminiscence. The words bear a decisive weight because they are written. It is by an appeal to the Scriptures that He proves the distinction between right and wrong. In them He finds a test of conduct, a guide through life, and a power to resist the evil one. The two commandments than which there is none greater are taken out of the Old Testament, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord (*Κύριος* = Yahweh) is our God; the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The second is this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.'¹ Again, when the Pharisees object to His intercourse with publicans and sinners, He bids them go and learn the meaning of a passage from Hosea.²

His reference to the Scriptures as to a final court of appeal is all the more significant, because He fully realized that their injunctions were not in every case perfect from a moral point of view. Here, then, was a point of departure at which a polemic against the Scriptures might be expected from Him, if He felt that they were receiving an exaggerated reverence. But when He finds that one passage of the Law supports an imperfect view of marriage, He refers to another (Mark x 2-8; Matt. xix 1-9). He comes into conflict with the religious leaders and representatives of Judaism on many occasions. This, however, is not because He draws His knowledge of God from a different source from theirs, but because they are wrong in their interpretation of what both recognize as the final authority. The Sadducees do greatly err in their disbelief in the Resurrection because they know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. A passage from Exodus is cited

¹ R. V. marg. of Mark xii 29-30; Deut. vi 4, 5; Lev. xix 18; cf. Luke x 25-8; Matt. xxii 34-40.

² Matt. ix 10-13; Hos. vi 6; cf. Matt. xii 1-7.

as a sufficient proof of this doctrine. 'But as touching the dead, that they are raised ; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living : ye do greatly err.'¹ The Law and the Prophets are a divine revelation as to the duty of man and are the final court of appeal. 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets'.²

Most striking of all, however, is the relation of the Scriptures to His consciousness of the necessity of His death and sufferings. Jesus, for some time before the Crucifixion, foresaw His death. No doubt He realized that the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees would be content with nothing less ; and no doubt this formed a real element in His forebodings. But was this all ? Was His anticipation of a violent death merely the pessimism of one who feels that the opposing forces are going to defeat him ? It is impossible to argue these questions out in full here. Suffice it to say that so far as the present writer can see, it is impossible to explain the attitude of Jesus towards the prospect of death, except on the supposition that He knew that death to be part of a divine scheme of things. He must have known that His death was not to spell defeat, but to usher in victory ; that God would not let matters rest there, but would vindicate Him and His work with triumphant glory ; that in and through His death, God was working out His own eternal plans. Jesus contemplated death because He knew it to be the work His Father had given Him to do. Hence it was necessary. Hence he looked forward to it with calmness and confidence, although with sorrow and anguish. But whence did He learn this scheme of things ? On what grounds did He rest His assurance that His death meant God's victory ? Here the Gospels point us to an answer—and to an answer which, in face of the evidence given above and below, there is reason to accept without hesitation. Jesus knew His death to be necessary, to be a part of the divine scheme of

¹ Mark xii 26-7 ; Matt. xxii 23-33 ; Luke xx 27-40.

² Matt. xxii 40 ; cf. vii 12 ; Luke xvi 29, 31.

things, because of what was written in the Old Testament. He knew Himself to be the Messiah ; and as He read the Scriptures, He found them eloquent of a divine purpose or scheme, in which the sufferings and death of the Messiah are included as an essential part.

It is interesting to note that where He speaks of the death of the Messiah as fore-ordained, He does not, as a rule, refer to any one special passage or set of passages. 'How is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought?' (Mark ix 12). 'The Son of man goeth even as it is written of him ; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed !'¹ 'How, then, should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?' (*ὅτι οὕτως δεῖ γενέσθαι*, Matt. xxvi 54). 'Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man' (Luke xviii 31 ; cf. 32 f.). 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken ! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things (*οὐχὶ ταῦτα ἔδει παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν*) and to enter into his glory ? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke xxiv 25-7). 'These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the Law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures ; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer (*οὕτως γέγραπται παθεῖν τὸν Χριστόν*) and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem' (Luke xxiv 44-7). 'For I say unto you that this which is written must be fulfilled in me (*δεῖ τελεσθῆναι ἐν ἐμοί*). And he was reckoned with transgressors : for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment' (*καὶ γὰρ τὸ περὶ ἐμοῦ τέλος ἔχει*, Luke xxii 37). This last is the one place in the Synoptic Gospels in which He refers to

¹ Mark xiv 21 ; Matt. xxvi 24 ; cf. Luke xxii 22.

a special passage of Scripture in connexion with His death, and it contains also the wider indefinite reference : ‘ and what is more (*καὶ γάρ*), that which concerneth me is drawing to its end or conclusion.’ The relation of special passages to Jesus’ foreknowledge of His death, and especially the relation of Isaiah liii, is a wide subject which needs more careful treatment than can be given to it here. Let us observe, however, that the passages quoted above show that Jesus found in the Old Testament, as a whole, not only in special passages and predictions, but in the general principles of theology, the great outstanding thoughts and features which run through the Scriptures from end to end, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, evidences of a great divine scheme of things in which His death as Messiah, His resurrection and the mission to the Gentiles was involved.

If He found in the Scriptures that which could prove the divine purpose and meaning of His life, death, and resurrection, that which manifested the plans and purposes of God, then the Scriptures are the unique and authoritative record of God’s self-revelation to, and dealings with men. He seems to imply by His references to the Old Testament, that God, having done such and such things in connexion with the Jewish nation, the record of which is found in these writings, having committed Himself, if one may use such an expression, to this first part of the scheme, must now go on to complete and to fulfil His purposes in the sacrifice of His well-beloved Son upon the Cross.

The high esteem in which He held the Scriptures is equalled by His respect for the Law of Moses as an institution and a rule of life. He observed it Himself and taught others to do so as well. His disciples take it as a matter of course that He will keep the Passover (Mark xiv 12). His custom is to attend the weekly meetings in the Synagogue when the Law is read.¹ He is indignant that the Temple is made a den of thieves when it ought to be a house of prayer for all nations (Mark xi 15–17). He pays the Temple tax that He may not cause a stumbling-block ; and if He claims a right to be exempt, it is not on the ground that the Temple is

¹ Matt. xii 9 ; xiii 54 ; Mark i 21 ; vi 2 ; Luke iv 16, 33, 44 ; xiii 10, &c.

nothing to Him nor He to the Temple, but because He is so much a son of the Temple that He ought not to be asked to contribute to its expenses (Matt. xvii 24-7). He assumes that those to whom He addressed the Sermon on the Mount would continue to offer gifts on the altar (Matt. v 23). On two occasions He contracted ceremonial uncleanness ; when He touched the leper (Mark i 41), and when he entered the house in which lay the dead body of Jairus' daughter and took her by the hand (Mark v 39-41). To become 'unclean' did not imply a wilful violation of the Mosaic Law ; for the Law was such that it was scarcely possible for any one to go through life without contracting ceremonial defilement from time to time. There would be no violation unless there was a failure to perform the rites of purification prescribed by the Law. We have no right to assume that Jesus did not purify Himself according to the ritual of the Law ; His command to the leper to go 'show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them' (Mark i 44), makes it probable that He, too, made the required offerings. Elsewhere also He lays it down that the minutiae of the Law, the tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin, ought to be done, though its weightier matters, judgement, and mercy, and faith, ought not to be left undone (Matt. xxiii 23).

Any one who attacks the official representatives of an institution, especially if the institution be ecclesiastical and its offices regarded as sacred, is always liable to be misrepresented as attacking the institution itself. And so when Jesus denounced the Scribes and Pharisees, He seems to have been specially careful to show that His words were directed against the individuals who represented the system, and not against the system itself. The concentrated invective against the Scribes and Pharisees contained in Matthew xxiii is preceded by the direction that since the Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, 'all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, these do and observe, but do not ye after their works ; for they say and do not' (Matt. xxiii 2, 3). Before He warns His hearers 'that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no

wise enter into the kingdom of heaven', He bids them not to think that He came to destroy the Law and the Prophets—He came not to destroy but to fulfil. 'For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'¹ It would have been difficult to state the obligatory character of the Law in terms more emphatic than these; if anything, they are too emphatic. Jesus, it appears, looked forward to the destruction of the Temple (Mark xiii 2) and the consequent cessation of the Mosaic ritual; and elsewhere He says that the Law and the Prophets were in force until John the Baptist came (Luke xvi 16; Matt. xi 13); hence the words 'till heaven and earth pass away' involve a difficulty. If one could omit this clause, the passage would become easily explicable. He Himself fulfilled the Law and the Prophets by bringing the Old Covenant to its intended end; but until that fulfilment is complete and the Kingdom of Heaven is inaugurated, no part of the Law shall lose its validity; and any one who breaks the least of its precepts and teaches men so to do is acting in a way which will disqualify him for high honour in the Kingdom.

He was often taken to task for His own behaviour and that of His disciples, because He did not conform to the complex system of rules and regulations, called 'the Tradition of the Elders', which the Scribes and lawyers made it their business to deduce from the Law. But His attitude towards the original Mosaic Law is seldom more clearly manifested than in these controversies. Nowhere does he deny the authority of the Law; only once, when He placed cleanness and uncleanness upon a moral rather than upon a ritual basis, does He appear to set aside the details of the Law; and this admits of being explained as an instance of the

¹ Matt. v 17-20; cf. Luke xvi 14-17. For other charges against the Scribes and Pharisees see Matt. vi 2, 5, 16; xvi 6, 11, 12; xxi 31, 35-43; Luke xi 39-52; xx 45, 47.

exercise of His Messianic authority.¹ In His controversies with the Pharisees He is not a revolutionary who entirely rejects the Law ; His attitude is that of one who recognizes the Law, but disputes a particular interpretation of it ; what He rejected was the tiresome burden of regulations extracted from the Law by the Scribes ; and from this Tradition of the Elders He appealed to the Law itself and to the Scriptures as to a higher court ; He condemned the Corban because it was one of those cases in which the Pharisees had rejected the commandment of God as given them by Moses in order to keep their own Tradition (Mark vii 8-12). He repudiated the distinction they drew between the sanctity of the Temple and that of the gold of the Temple, between the sanctity of the altar and that of the gift which was on the altar ; for it was the altar which gave sanctity to the gift upon it, and ' he that sweareth by the temple sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein ' (Matt. xxiii 16-21).

The chief causes of offence which the Pharisees found in His conduct were (1) what they regarded as His laxity in observing the Sabbath ; (2) His neglect of ceremonial ablutions and fastings ; (3) the freedom of His intercourse with publicans and sinners. In none of these cases did He violate the Mosaic Law itself, but only the strict customs of the Pharisees.

(1) In one important class of cases, those of healing on the Sabbath, there was no infringement even of the Tradition. It was pure jealousy which prompted the ruler of the synagogue to say, ' There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the Sabbath ' (Luke xiii 14). And here Jesus was able to make a crushing appeal to their own customs. The Tradition allowed them to loose an ox or an ass on the Sabbath and lead it to water—though not to bring water to the animal—' And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath ? ' ² Elsewhere He appeals to charity and to common

¹ Cf. below, pp. 242 f.

² Luke xiii 10-16; cf. Plummer in loc.

sense. 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm? to save a life, or to destroy it?' (Ezek. vi 9; cf. Mark iii 1-4). 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' (Mark ii 27). When His disciples are rebuked for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath, which was one of the thirty-nine kinds of work prohibited in later years by the Mishna, He defends them by appealing to the case of David and his men, who, under unusual circumstances, ate the shewbread which by the Law was reserved for the priests alone.¹ The way in which He justifies His conduct on these occasions seems to support, rather than to depreciate, the idea that the Sabbath is a sacred institution.

(2) The Jewish custom of ceremonial washings before eating was no part of the original Law, but was strictly observed by the majority of the people as well as by the Pharisees.² The objection of the Pharisees to the neglect of these rules by His disciples furnished the occasion for His declaration that the Tradition really sets aside the commandment of God (Mark vii 1-9). With regard to fastings, the only regular fast of universal obligation under the Mosaic Law was that of the great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi 29-31; xxiii 27-32). There is no reason to think that Jesus and His disciples did not observe this. The question of the disciples of John and of the Pharisees merely shows that they were surprised that Jesus, as a religious teacher, did not impose upon His followers special rules of His own for fasting, as John the Baptist and others did (Mark ii 18; Matt. ix 14; Luke v 33).

(3) As little does the murmuring of the Pharisees at His intercourse with publicans and sinners imply any breach with the Law of Moses (Luke v 29-31; xv 2; xix 7). Inter-marriage with uncircumcised Gentiles was forbidden by the Law, but no distinctions are drawn between Israelites. In none of the charges, then, which were brought against the conduct of Jesus by the Pharisees is there any trace of a real violation of the Mosaic Law.

After this evidence as to His attitude towards the Scriptures

¹ Mark ii 23-6; cf. Driver in *H. D. B.* iv 317-22.

² Cf. A. S. Peake, *H. D. B.* iv 833 b.

and the Law, one is quite prepared to find that He accepted the idea of special Jewish privilege. This comes out with special clearness in a passage to which reference has already been made. To the Scribe's question as to the first commandment of all, He replied : ' The first is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord (*Κύριος* = Yahweh) is our God ; the Lord is one : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . ' (Mark xii 28-30, R.V. marg.). This passage, as it stands in the Old Testament, expresses the very essence of the Jewish claim to a monopoly of religious privilege. Yahweh is one ; there is no God but He ; therefore all other objects of worship must be shunned. If it appear conceivable to some minds that Jesus did not intend the word 'Lord' to be taken in the exclusive sense in which it is used in the Old Testament, but that He gave to it a wider and more inclusive significance than the 'Yahweh' of old, yet the Scribe who raised the question must have understood Him to refer to the national God of Israel alone, and so to Him it must have sounded like a restatement of the ancient claim of the Jews, that no other worship but that which Israel offered was in reality the worship of the Living God. The attitude of his mind is clearly shown when he goes on to restate the answer of Jesus even more explicitly and in the phraseology of the Old Testament. 'Of a truth, Master, thou hast well said that he is one ; and there is none other but he : and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices' (Mark xii 32, 33). It seems impossible to doubt that those who witnessed the scene understood Jesus to mean precisely the same thing as the Scribe ; for it is recorded that 'when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God' (Mark xii 31).

And this passage does not stand alone. He identifies the God of whom He speaks with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ;¹ with the Yahweh from whom Moses received

¹ Mark xii 26 = Matt. xxii 32 = Luke xx 37.

commands ;¹ He Himself was sent by the God who sent the prophets of old.² On the other hand, it is impossible to point to any passages in which the God whom He calls 'Father' is spoken of as a different Person from the God who is known in Scripture as the national God of Israel. His attitude towards the idea of special Jewish privilege may be seen, again, in His teaching on the Kingdom. Into the subject of the Kingdom it is impossible to go at any length here ; but it is of importance to observe that while He rejected entirely the Jewish idea that the coming of the Kingdom would involve political supremacy for the Jews, He did not reject the idea that the Kingdom was meant for the Jew first, if for the Gentile also. He does not exclude the Gentiles, but the Jews have a prior claim and greater responsibilities. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets will, of course, sit down in the Kingdom of heaven, and many shall come from the east and the west to sit down with them, but ye, yourselves, who as the sons of the kingdom ought to inherit it, shall for your hardness of heart be cast out (Matt. viii 11, 12 ; Luke xiii 28, 29).

Again, 'the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast' (Matt. xxii 2, 3). When those who are specially bidden—apparently the Jews—refuse to come, others are summoned ; for 'none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper' (Luke xiv 24). As the Jews have special privileges, so also they have special responsibilities. He has a right to look for greater faith in Israel than elsewhere (Matt. viii 10 ; Luke vii 9). The twelve apostles shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory (Matt. xix 28 ; Luke xxii 30). The Scribes and Pharisees knew that the parable of the wicked husbandman was spoken against them ; they are the husbandmen whom the owner placed in charge of his vineyard and held responsible for its fruits. But he will come and destroy the husbandmen

¹ Mark xii 29, 30 = Luke x 25-8 = Matt. xxii 34-40.

² Mark xii 1-8 = Luke x 9-19 = Matt. xxi 33-46.

and give the vineyard to others.¹ 'Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matt. xxi 43). He attaches no small importance to descent from Abraham (Luke xiii 16 ; xix 9). The Jews are the children who should be fed first ; and it is not meet to take their bread and cast it to the Gentiles. The word which obtained for the woman an answer to her petition was not merely her expression of faith in Jesus' power, but her admission of the superiority of the Jewish religion (Mark vii 27 ; Matt. xv 26). The Gentiles are frequently introduced as representing a standard of religious and moral conduct which ought to be surpassed (Matt. v 47 ; vi 7, 8, 32 ; xx 25).

The testimony of the Fourth Gospel is, on these points, in harmony with that of the Synoptic tradition. The Scriptures cannot be treated as if they were invalid (John x 35) ; they bear witness concerning Jesus (v 39). Moses, on whom the Jews set their hope, will be their accuser ; for if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus ; for Moses wrote of Him (v 45, 46). As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up (iii 14 ; cf. ii 22 ; xiii 18 ; xv 25). Again, the Temple is His Father's house, which should not be made a house of merchandise (ii 16). He attends the Feasts at Jerusalem.² There is the same trouble about the observance of the Sabbath ; but the points at which they took offence were violations of the Tradition, not of the Mosaic Law (v 8-12).

And these objections, it will be seen, are met in much the same way. His Father does not cease from working for the benefit of men on the Sabbath, nor does He (v 17). If circumcision may be performed on the Sabbath, that the Law may be fulfilled, may He not heal ? (vii 23). The Pharisees thought to surprise Him into taking an attitude of disloyalty to the Law of Moses when they confronted Him with the woman taken in adultery. Jesus says that the Law should take its course, but on this condition, that the execution of the cruel sentence should be begun by

¹ Mark xii 9 ; cf. xii 1-12 ; Matt. xxi 33-46 ; Luke xx 9-19.

² ii 13, 23 ; v 1 ; vii 10 ; xii 12.

him who was himself without sin (viii 3-11). The saying that God is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, and that neither on Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem should men worship the Father, ought not to be interpreted to mean that the Jews never had had any special privileges, but rather that in the new dispensation which He will inaugurate, the terms under which men approach the Father will be altered. For the present and the past, even the half-Judaic religion of the Samaritans is a worship of 'that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews' (iv 21-3).

According to the Gospels, then, Jesus associated Himself completely with the Jewish religion and the Jewish conception of the method of divine self-Revelation. But this is not the whole picture. One cannot read the Gospel story without observing that He seems to have been conscious of an authority within Himself which He places alongside that of the national religious institutions. He lays His own words down beside the commands of the Law and gives men to understand that they are the weightier. 'Ye have heard that it was said unto them of old time . . . but I say unto you.' On one occasion, in spite of the regulations regarding uncleanness in the Mosaic Law, He declares that that which enters in from without does not defile a man.¹ In these passages He is not simply pointing men to a better way and a higher ideal; He is not merely inviting men, in the spirit of a moral philosopher, to contrast His system of morality with that of the Law and to observe how much better His is; He is declaring the will of God with authority. The Jews knew nothing of theoretical morals and would scarcely have appreciated such an argument. They judged moral precepts chiefly by the authority behind them; who issued this command? they would ask—is it from God or from man?

In the same way in His teaching about the character of God, He uses the recognized authority of the Scriptures

¹ Mark vii 15, 18, 19; cf. Matt. xv 11, 20; and see the discussion on this passage in Montefiore, *The Religious Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 47-50.

where possible, but also speaks in reliance on His own authority and without depending upon them. 'Even so I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth' (Luke xv 10 ; cf. 7); 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (Matt. xxiv 35 ; Mark xiii 31 ; Luke xxi 33). The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, just as He has power on earth to forgive sins (Mark ii 28, 10); and is greater than the Temple (Matt. xii 6 ; cf. 41, 42). This consciousness of authority made its own impression on the mass of the people. They were astonished at His teaching; for He taught, not as the Scribes who rested solely on the authority of the Law, but as one who had an original authority of His own.¹ And so when the Gospels present Jesus as claiming the title of Messiah, they make the picture they present consistent with itself; for the very essence of the Messianic office implied authority from God to reveal and to fulfil His will.

But the Gospel picture would be quite incomplete if one left out that great act of Messianic authority by which He declared His death to be the inauguration of the New Covenant and that His blood was being shed for the forgiveness of sins.² As we are still moving within the circle of Jewish ideas, and are still dealing with minds nurtured upon the Old Testament as the authoritative self-Revelation of God, the significance which He is said to have attached to His Death on the Cross is in no way out of harmony with the rest of the picture. Just as Moses, by the authority of God committed unto him, inaugurated the Old Covenant by the shedding of blood in sacrifice, so the Messiah, by the same authority, inaugurated a New Covenant by the shedding of His own Blood for the forgiveness of sins.³

It is worth while to pause for a moment to think out the

¹ Mark i 22 ; cf. vi 2 ; Matt. vii 28, 29 ; Luke iv 22, 32.

² Mark xiv 22-4 ; Matt. xxvi 26-8 ; Luke xxii 17-19.

³ On the whole subject of Jesus' attitude to the law cf. Denney in Hastings's *D. B.* iii 73-6 ; B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of N. T.* 107-12 ; Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, 14-38 ; Montefiore, *Religious Teaching of Jesus*, pp. 30-52.

consequences of this act as they bear upon the religion of the Jews. The Gospels depict Jesus as sharing in the general expectation of the early arrival of the end of this world and the beginning of the new age. He Himself, as Messiah, will appear again with power and great glory to judge the world.¹ With this return to judgement must the forgiveness of sins obtained by His Death be connected. Those who accept Him as Messiah, who are willing to acknowledge Him before men and to receive the salvation He offers, will be saved in the day of His appearing. Before the great Day of Judgement comes, He sets forth a new and assured means of salvation; it is only necessary for the individual to take this offer, to repent of his sins and to trust Himself completely to Jesus as to the Messiah of God. And this was bound to have a far-reaching effect upon the religious life of those who accepted Jesus as Messiah. If salvation is to be obtained by faith in Jesus, the observance of the Law can no longer be essential. The Mosaic Law was bound to lose its original significance and importance. And with the Law went circumcision, and with circumcision went all necessity for becoming a member of the Jewish nation; the New Covenant was such that its blessings might be enjoyed by Gentiles on precisely the same conditions as by Jews. Hence it is quite true to say that Jesus delivered men from the burden of the Law; that He broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile; that He stripped the true religion of all its national limitations, and set before the world the universal brotherhood of man in one God the universal Father.

If, then, the gospel picture of Jesus is taken as it stands, it is clear that He is represented as accepting the common belief in the supernatural origin of the institutions of the Jewish religion, and as claiming to possess power and authority to release men from all obligation to the Law by instituting a New Covenant. This alternative, then, is beyond doubt contained in the Gospels. Is the other alternative also contained in them? Do they anywhere

¹ Luke xxii 28-30; Matt. xix 28; Mark viii 38; xiii 26, 27; xiv 61, 62; Matt. xvi 27, 28; xxv 31, 32.

represent Jesus as denying or arguing against the obligatory character of the Law? Is His teaching, explicitly or implicitly, inconsistent with a belief in the unique authority of Judaism? One must now reckon with the fact that, in the opinion of many students, not only is this alternative contained within the Gospels, but it is to be preferred to the other.

Let us therefore examine some of the arguments advanced in this behalf. Dr. Harnack has said that Jesus 'traversed the claim that the descendants of Abraham, in virtue of their descent, were sure of salvation, and based the idea of divine sonship exclusively upon repentance, humility, faith, and love. In so doing he disentangled religion from its national setting. Men, not Jews, were to be its adherents. Then, as it became plainer than ever that the Jewish people as a whole and through their representatives were spurning His messages, He announced with increasing emphasis that a judgement was coming upon 'the children of the Kingdom', and prophesied, as His forerunner had done already, that the Table of His Father would not lack for guests, but that a crowd would pour in, morning, noon, and night, from the highways and hedges'.¹ It is worth while to examine this passage closely, because it is typical of the attitude taken by many scholars. At the outset, then, one must point out an ambiguity in the word 'based'; when it is said that He 'based the idea of divine sonship exclusively upon repentance', &c., this may be understood in two ways. (1) It may mean that Jesus knew that divine sonship had before His day been based—not merely in the opinion of men, but by the act of God—upon membership in the Jewish race and religion as well as upon repentance, &c.; and in this case, He 'based' it exclusively upon repentance, &c., in the sense that He was endowed by God with authority to alter that which God had once appointed through Moses. Or (2) one may reject all idea of an authoritative act, and mean that Jesus 'based' divine sonship upon repentance in the same sense as that in which Socrates based virtue upon knowledge, i.e. He was a teacher

¹ *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, i, p. 36.

who expressed what He thought to be the truth, but claimed no superhuman authority for his views.

This ambiguity in the term 'based' is responsible for much confusion of thought, because it blinds one's eyes to the real nature of the issue at stake. On the one hand, it does not either explicitly affirm or explicitly deny the divine authority of the Law; nor does it define the authority, if any, which Jesus claimed. On the other hand, it enables one to think that, whatever degree of authority the Law may be supposed to have, the authority of so great a teacher as Jesus would certainly far outweigh it. All this is highly satisfying to the modern mind with its hazy notions of authority in religion. But Jesus lived in an atmosphere in which there was no ambiguity whatever on this point. The Mosaic religion was, in the unquestioned belief of the Jews, the infallibly inspired and supernaturally communicated revelation of God and His means of salvation. The Jew would recognize no religious authority which did not originate with God Himself. The issue stands out clear-cut and sharply defined in that atmosphere; either, the Mosaic system was what the Jews believed it to be, a special act of God mediated through human instrumentality—in which case it could not be abolished except by another special act of the divine will—or else, it was at best the act of men who devised it as the highest expression of the divine will they could imagine, in which case any one who could improve upon it was at liberty to do so. Apparently it is the latter alternative which Dr. Harnack would ascribe to Jesus. Let us then see what support can be found for this position in the Gospels.

It is, of course, true that he is represented as declaring that repentance, faith, humility, and love are necessary conditions of entrance upon the Kingdom, and that without these mere Jewish extraction and Pharisaic strictness will avail nothing. But this does not necessarily mean that in His judgement the Law and descent from Abraham are not, and never have been, of any value. To emphasize one condition of salvation is not to deny all others. The words of the Baptist were quite as uncompromising as those of

Jesus ; and yet he is not supposed to have taught that the outward forms of Judaism are no better than those of other religions. The fact of the matter is that a condemnation of the Jewish belief that they, as members of the Jewish religion and as children of Abraham, have an advantage over others cannot logically be got out of the words of Jesus. One might be filled with the most intense conviction that humility, repentance, love, and faith are necessary to the divine favour ; but if one has been brought up to believe that God Himself commanded the observance of certain outward forms, that conviction could not lead one to teach that these commands of God might be brushed aside as though they were of purely human origin.

It is no doubt true that Jesus regarded love and mercy as the weightier matters of the Law, more important than the ceremonial directions ; but this is not the same as saying that the latter had never been given by God, or that, though given by God, they might be disregarded. It must be remembered that, neither in the Old Testament nor in the traditions of the Jews, is any distinction made between the moral and the ceremonial parts of the Law in respect of degree of authority ; both alike were revealed directly by God, and both alike were regarded as authoritative on this same ground.¹ Hence, if any one maintains that Jesus denied the authority of the ritual regulations but acknowledged the obligation to observe the moral law, it must be replied that whatever caused Him to abandon belief in the ceremonial Law as a direct revelation would also cause Him to abandon belief in the moral precepts of the Law as the work of God ; for both stood on the same basis. If, then, He still maintained that men ought to obey the moral Law, He must have had some other grounds for believing that this is a duty of man to God, i. e. it is necessary to ascribe to Him a fully developed theory of the nature of existence and of the ultimate sanction of morals. And this without a trace in the Gospels of any such crisis or disturbance in the development of His religious life !

Again, it is quite true that Jesus foretold the entrance

¹ Cf. Montefiore, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 f.

of many others besides Jews into the Kingdom. Many will come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham, while the children of the Kingdom are cast out.¹ Because we read these words in the light of later events, we naturally read into them a prophecy of the admission of Gentiles as Gentiles into the Kingdom. And the passages are quite patient of this interpretation. And if they mean this, it is surely not inconceivable that Jesus spoke thus because He foresaw what the effect of His institution of the New Covenant would be. But they do not necessarily mean this. It may quite well be understood that the Gentiles will enter by submitting to the conditions which all Jews thought would be essential to entrance into the Kingdom, i.e. circumcision and the Mosaic Law. And this was evidently the sense in which the words were taken, not only by the Jews who heard them, but also by the Apostles ; for in the great controversy over the Gentiles no appeal was made to this passage or to others of similar import.

Once more, let us observe also that when Dr. Harnack says He 'based divine sonship *exclusively* upon repentance, humility, faith, and love', and that 'men, not Jews,' were the adherents of religion, his negatives, 'exclusively' and 'not Jews', are absent from the Gospels. Jesus certainly taught that the mere fact of being descended from Abraham would not suffice to save a man, but there is no evidence in the Gospels that He took the still further step and declared that membership in the Jewish religion was of no more value than membership in any other.² Dr. Harnack's negatives are a deduction from the words of Jesus ; and they are a deduction which it is not easy for the modern mind to

¹ Matt. viii 11, 12 ; Luke xiii 28, 29 ; Matt. xxii 9, 10 ; Luke xiv 21-24.

² It will be noted that Dr. Harnack does not say 'men, not Jews, *are* the adherents of the true religion' ; that would have meant that, according to the mind of Jesus, it made little or no difference whether a man worshipped the one Almighty God of the Jews or one of the polytheistic deities. Dr. Harnack's words are 'men, not Jews *were to be* its adherents'. But does not this mean that up to the coming of Jesus the Jews alone had been the members of the true religion, whereas, after His coming and in consequence of His work, there would be a change and men of other races also would join it ?

refrain from drawing, because our whole view of religion is so strongly coloured by such ideas as, that religion is one great fact assuming so many different temporary and local embodiments ; that God makes no distinction between men as such ; and above all, that the Old Testament is merely the best of many other human productions. So many of us approach the Gospel story with so strong a bias against the exclusive claims of Judaism and with so strong a sense of the universality of that religion which claims Jesus as its founder, that we are predisposed to turn every statement which lends itself to the purpose into a denial that the Jews had ever possessed exclusive privileges. In such a frame of mind as this nothing is easier than to deduce from the teaching of Jesus a denial of the unique authority of the Jewish religion.

But of course these liberal notions about the native equality of all religions in the sight of God and the human origin of the Scriptures are the children of the philosophical view of the world ; they were entirely foreign to the mental atmosphere in which the words of Jesus were spoken. If any one approaches the words of Jesus after he has stripped his mind of all these modern universalistic notions, and clothed his thoughts in the fundamental principles and conceptions of those to whom Jesus spoke, he will find nothing which can be logically argued into a denial of the Jewish claims.

But let us take one more typical argument. Professor Wilhelm Bousset admits that there is much in the Gospels which at first glance shows that Jesus throughout His life and work was united to His own people.

‘ Yet in spite of this, deliverance from nationalities is to be found in the Gospel of Jesus. But it was an inward redemption ; Jesus ever remained a faithful son of His nation, but He delivered His faith from merely national interests. This sprang from the very centre of His religion. We can best comprehend this if we realize the essential idea of the preaching of Jesus, the idea of the Kingdom of God. What did this hope of the Kingdom of God signify to the Judaism of His time ? Above all it signified hope in a time when the people of Israel should be victorious and should succeed to world-wide domination ; when it should trample

upon the hated Roman Empire ; when a king from the race of David should rule over Palestine, over Jerusalem, and far over the wide world ; when the heathen should pay tribute, the prisoners of Israel be freed, Jerusalem built gloriously again—a period in which God should rule over His people on earth and dwell with the faithful. What became of this belief in the preaching of Jesus ? It was glorified and transfigured. The kingdom which Jesus looked forward to was indeed the reign of God, a condition of affairs in which God's will was done in heaven and on earth, when the pious should see God, should experience mercy, and should live in eternal joy—Jesus speaks quite calmly of material joys—in community with God. All the other elements of the Jewish national hope fall completely into the background. And if these notes are now and again struck, they are, as it were, the last sounds of an old song that is dying away. Thus Jesus freed the belief in the future life, and with this belief piety, from any thought of the Jewish nation.' ¹

It seems to be thought by many people that once you have pointed out that the Kingdom, according to Jewish expectation, involved a period of political supremacy and material prosperity for the Jewish nation, and that in the teaching of Jesus, it represented a period of spiritual blessing for the individual, you have done with the subject entirely ; that once you know that there is a difference between Jesus' idea of the Kingdom and that which was current among the Jews, it is quite unnecessary to discuss the matter any further ; it is concluded that Jesus' idea is in every respect the antithesis of the Jewish, and that therefore the national-religious, as well as the national-political, element disappears entirely from His conception.

But if Jesus' conception of the Kingdom differed so completely from theirs, one wonders why He chose to burden His teaching with this term, seeing that the use of it could only tend to obscure His real meaning. Unless the term covered in their minds something which was of value for His purposes, unless there was some element common to His and their ideas of the future, unless He had wished merely to correct and not to entirely replace their expectations by something else, He surely would never have used

¹ Bousset, *What is Religion ?* pp. 218 f.

this term at all. The very fact that He was at such pains to enlighten their minds on this subject, to remove some elements in their conception and to add new ones of His own, is an indication that the term, as they understood it, contained something which He believed to be profoundly true and therefore of great value.

Now Bousset's argument seems to overlook the fact that the Jewish nation was an organization which had two aspects—aspects which are not often found combined in the same body of men to-day ; it was at once a political entity and a religious society. A little discussion will show that while Jesus rejected the idea that the Kingdom meant a period of political supremacy for the Jewish nation in its political aspect, He did not reject the idea that it would be a vindication of the Jewish nation as a religious society. This latter was the element in the common conception of the Kingdom which made the term of value for His purposes.

What was it, which, in the last analysis, constituted the Jews into a single religious society and marked them off from all others ? As a political entity they were distinguished by birth, political allegiance, national traditions, &c.; but as a religious fellowship, the common bond which held them together and apart from the rest of mankind was, in the last resort, the worship of one and the same God whom they believed to be at once Almighty and also the national God of Israel. Other religious organizations did not worship, and did not pretend to worship, this God ; they were banded together for the worship of one or more of the polytheistic deities.

Now Jesus was undoubtedly a monotheist, and He certainly expected that in the Kingdom the worship of the one true God would continue—a worship which hitherto had been carried on by the Jews alone and was the ultimate ground of their union into one religious whole. Hence Jesus must have expected that Israel as a religious society would continue, since that which was the essence of the Jewish nation in its religious aspect was to continue. He might well have contemplated the dissolution of the Jewish nation as a political unit ; but He could not have con-

templated its extinction as a religious society, unless He expected that the worship of the one true God would cease altogether.

Our eyes are blinded to the truth of this because our range of vision is filled up by the historic fact that the Jewish nation, refusing to believe in the advent of the Kingdom, continued, both as a political and as a religious organization, a life of its own independent of that religious society which acknowledged Jesus as its Founder. Hence we are wont to dissociate the Church entirely from the religious aspect of the Jewish nation. As a matter of fact, however, it will be seen below¹ that the Church claimed, and had a right to claim, that by unbelief in Jesus the Messiah the Jews as a nation had deprived themselves of their proud position of being the people of God ; that such religious life as they still possessed was a shadow without a reality ; that the real worship of the true God, the priceless privileges which had once belonged to the Jews alone, and the fulfilment of the promises, had now passed over to those who had obeyed the national God by believing in His Messiah. The Christians claimed a direct continuity between themselves and the Israel of old ; they were not a new people but the old ; they were the true seed of Abraham and the Israel of God.

But to return to Bousset. It is no doubt true that the thought of the political and material advantages of the Kingdom bulked large in the minds of many Jews. But in the very nature of the Messianic Hope, these were not the primary elements. Indeed, they were entirely secondary, the consequences of something else which was primary. That something else was the manifestation of the power of the God who through all the ages had been known to and worshipped by Israel alone. It is just because this one true God has chosen Israel out of all the families of the earth to be His 'people', the special objects of His cherishing love and protection, and the company of men to whom alone He has revealed Himself and by whom alone He is worshipped, that there was any expectation of any

¹ Vol. II, c. ii.

coming of a Kingdom at all. The Kingdom was primarily and essentially the vindication of Israel's God as the one Almighty God, and consequently the vindication of Israel's religion as the only true religion. If then Jesus meant that, when the Kingdom came, the religion of Israel would not be distinguished from any other, He meant by the Kingdom something which was not only different from the view of those to whom He preached, but something which was totally and essentially different. If this was so, the use of the term would only have served to disguise His real meaning.

Indeed, on this view, it is difficult to see how Jesus could have shared the Messianic Hope at all, or how He could ever have thought of Himself as the Messiah. The Messianic Hope sprang from the conviction that the one Almighty All-holy God had chosen Israel alone and was united to and worshipped by Israel alone. Destroy the conviction, and all the grounds for expecting a Messiah vanish. If other nations also are united to the Living God, if other men also know Him under other names, and if He is elsewhere revealed under other forms, then all reason for believing that He will one day manifest Himself as more closely related to the Jewish nation than to any other disappears entirely.¹ The Messianic Kingdom was the name applied to the age in which the promises given exclusively to the Jewish fathers were to be fulfilled. The work of the Messiah was to fulfil those promises—unless, indeed, He appeared after they had already been fulfilled. Now Jesus, it is generally admitted by all schools of criticism, believed in the Messianic Hope. Is it conceivable, then, that He could have rejected the idea that exclusive promises and privileges were given to the Jewish fathers? Or rather, the argument should be put in this way. Jesus was conscious of having been sent as Messiah. The function of the Messiah was to fulfil the promises believed to have been made by God to the Jewish fathers and to vindicate in the sight of all men the terms of the Covenant, 'I will be their God and they shall be my people.' That Jesus claimed to

¹ Cf. vol. I, c. vii.

be Messiah is a proof that He believed that special promises had been made by the true God to the Patriarchs, that there was a real bond between Israel and God, to which God had proved Himself faithful by sending forth His Messiah.

The Messiah was to be God's plenipotentiary, endowed with complete authority to fulfil His will ; but there were two things which not even He could do. He could not undo the past ; He could not make the Mosaic Covenant to be as though it had never been at all ; He could not make this to be any less the act of God, although it was quite conceivable that He might supersede it by a new Law or a new Covenant. Again, He could not make to be the service of the Living God that which had before been branded by all the accredited representatives of God as the worship of demons or the service of mere senseless wood and stone. Of all the people in the world, the Messiah, the embodiment of the national hopes and religious aspirations of the Jews at their very best, was the last person who could cast doubts upon the exclusive calling of Israel or the exclusive value of the Jewish religion, either by raising other religions to its level, or by declaring that its outward forms had not been appointed by God. A religious teacher who was not prepared to uphold the unique value of Judaism among religions could not wish to associate himself with the Messianic Hope in any form ; an atheist would be as likely to become a missionary or to enter the religious life. Moreover, if the Apostles had thought that Jesus took up any such negative attitude towards the national religion, they could never have found the Messiah in Him.

IV

This brings us to the third part of this inquiry. Which of our two alternatives is most in accord with the known consequences of Jesus' work ? And here, of course, we are met at once by the fact that a great society, which received its initial impulse from Jesus, came into existence and denied the universal obligation of the Law. It is here, then, that one must expect to find the clearest proofs of a denial of

the peculiar claims of the Jewish religion, if Jesus did indeed deny them and if this denial was responsible for the universalism so characteristic of the Christian society.

A direct and open attack upon the authority of the Jewish institutions is quite out of the question. Jewish feeling was extraordinarily sensitive upon this point ;¹ any teaching which seemed to cast doubts upon it would have been resented at once and punished. And such apostasy could not have failed to make a deep impression upon memory in close association with His name, and so would have been sure to find a place in the records of His life. Had it been possible to prove a charge of this kind against Him, it would have been done. His enemies were constantly on the watch to catch Him in some disloyalty to the Law, or in inciting men to disregard it, but the best that could be done was to get certain false witnesses to say, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands."' And not even so did their witness agree together' (Mark xiv 58, 59). Moreover, as Montefiore has well said, 'no universalistic element in his teaching constituted any part of the conflict between himself and the Jewish authorities.'²

If, then, Jesus was a purely human teacher who sought to induce in the minds of others a disbelief in the exclusive value of Judaism, He must have done so indirectly, by enunciating fundamental principles which, while not directly denying the claims of Judaism, would yet in the course of time, when their full import was realized, cause men to abandon those claims as no longer tenable. Now if this was the case, we have a right to expect that these fundamental principles, whatever they were, played an important part in the great controversy over the admission of the Gentiles, and that they exercised a profound influence upon the minds of the Apostles ; in short, we have a right to expect that these fundamental principles and their logical implications, though latent in the Gospels, will be patent

¹ Cf. Acts vi 13, 14 ; xi 3 ; xxi 21, 28 ; xxii 22.

² *Synoptic Gospels*, p. lxxxv.

in the Epistles and the Book of Acts. But as a matter of fact, when we examine the process by which the Apostles came to recognize the religious equality of Jew and Gentile, we do not find any appeal to the general abstract principles of the teaching of Jesus. The evidence of the Acts and the Epistles goes to show that the Apostles did not draw any such conclusions from any such principles as this view supposes, for they are nowhere described as arguing against the Jews that their ideas of the exclusive calling and privilege of Israel were quite without foundation. The real cause of their recognition of the religious equality of Jew and Gentile was this : they came to believe that Jesus was clothed with divine authority and that by this authority He had inaugurated a new Covenant under which Jew and Gentile alike are saved—not by the works of the Law, but by faith in Jesus and the saving efficacy of His death. And this was confirmed by an appeal to experience, to the fact that God gave the Holy Spirit to uncircumcised Gentiles when they believed on the Lord Jesus, just as He had done to circumcised Jews.¹

So far were the Apostles from looking back upon Jesus as upon one who taught them that the national hopes and claims of the Jews were groundless, that they regarded Him as the proof, the vindication, and the realization of those hopes and claims. Jesus was the fulfilment of the promises made by God to the Fathers.

Moreover, the question at issue in the great Gentile controversy did not concern the validity of the Mosaic Law in pre-Messianic times ; that much was assumed by both sides ; the point at issue was whether the Law was at that time, under the New Covenant, essential to the salvation of Gentiles who believed in the God of the Scriptures and in Jesus as His Messiah ; and when this question was answered in the negative, the believing Jews still regarded themselves as under obligation to the Law, apparently because they still believed that it had been imposed by God upon their forefathers.

In fact the whole attitude of the Apostles towards the

¹ Acts x 44-8 ; xi 17, 18 ; xv 7-11 ; Gal iii 2, &c.

Jewish Law, the Jewish Scriptures, and the ancient claims of Israel proves that they retained no consciousness that Jesus had ever taught them, explicitly or implicitly, anything to militate against a belief in the supernatural revelation and authority of the ancient Jewish religion. These points will be found more fully discussed in vol. ii, cc. i-iii.

Those, then, who maintain that Jesus denied the supernatural authority of the Jewish religion have first of all to postulate a serious break in His life somewhere before His public ministry in order to dissociate Him from that stream of belief and tradition into which He was born and in which He lived ; then, in order to account for the fact that He still remained a monotheist, they have to connect His life with some other source of monotheistic belief, i.e. He came under the influence of philosophical learning. After this it is necessary to postulate another break immediately after His death in order to separate His teaching from that of the Apostles ; for whereas He cut Himself off from the stream of national thought by denying that a supernatural revelation had ever been given to Moses, His chosen disciples whom He had carefully instructed, strange to say, went back to the national belief immediately after His death and maintained that the Law had once been imposed by God, although they said that its observation was not now obligatory upon the Gentiles. This implies a distinct fall or relapse on their part ; for whatever it was which confirmed Him in His ethical monotheism after He had abandoned the idea of a special revelation to the Jews, this had little or no influence with His disciples ; the philosophical current of thought which is supposed to have affected Jesus was removed as soon as His presence was withdrawn. And when this current of philosophical thought has been switched off, as it were, the current of Jewish belief must once more be switched on for the Apostles. According to this view, the religious beliefs of Jesus, while superficially in agreement with those of His contemporaries, were yet, in their inner root and fountain source, disconnected from the Jewish monotheism ; and yet His most intimate friends and disciples do not seem to have been aware that He thus

dissociated Himself from that which they themselves clung to as closely as any of the Jews.

But even this is not all. On this view, all the records and traditions of His life are hopelessly false. In their complete failure to register any trace of Jesus' philosophical learning, they prove themselves to know nothing of His real thought and inner life. In their representation of Him as claiming authority to declare the Mosaic Covenant to be superseded by a new mode of approach to God, they merely show how completely they are dominated by the stream of monotheistic thought and belief which, with the single exception of Jesus, flowed on unbroken throughout the Jewish nation from the days before His birth till long after His death, and which reappeared in full unquestioned vigour in His own Apostles and disciples.

On the other hand, the theory which makes Jesus accept the Jewish Law as a supernatural revelation and supersede it by another act of supernatural authority is, so far as scientific history is concerned, unexceptionable. It has behind it the clear and consistent evidence of the Gospels. It describes an attitude and a process which is thoroughly in accord with the religious-historical situation of the day. On the one hand, we know that Jesus was brought up by and associated with men who had never questioned the exclusive value of the religion of the Jews; hence His adherence to the Mosaic Covenant as a divinely appointed institution. On the other hand, we know that there was abroad among the Jews a general expectation that God would send to them an Anointed representative clothed with full authority to declare His will. There was no meaning in Jesus' claim to be Messiah, unless He felt Himself to possess the Messianic authority. There is, then, no difficulty from the side of history in accepting the Gospel evidence that, in virtue of this Messianic authority, He declared the Mosaic Covenant to be out of date and claimed to introduce by His death on the Cross a New Covenant in which salvation is offered to all who repent and believe. If He accepted the Scriptures as the authoritative revelation of God's will, He must have regarded the principle of

sacrifice in atonement for sin as one which requires satisfaction. Hence there is no historical difficulty in the idea that He represented His death as the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, which at once constituted the New Covenant and secured salvation to all who would accept it. Furthermore, if the basis of salvation is shifted from the Law to a personal apprehension of His death, then it must in course of time come to be recognized by all believers that the Law can no longer be imposed as essential for salvation, and that consequently the privileges of the New Covenant are thrown open to Gentiles on the same terms as to Jews.

And thus not only does this alternative fully explain the course which events took in the Apostolic Age, but it also gives us a natural and simple account, which is in entire accord with the evidence of Acts and the Epistles, of how the work of Jesus influenced the minds of His disciples.

The present discussion does not, of course, pretend to be a full account of the Personality of Jesus ; else it could not stop here. But it does stop here because it is sufficient for the purposes of the present argument to have shown that when we attempt to get back to the ' historical ' Jesus, we find ourselves confronted with a belief in the supernatural authority of the Jewish religion and a claim on His part to possess a similar supernatural authority.

V

As against those who set out with a belief that Jesus was not divine in a unique sense, the considerations given above appear to be conclusive. But, on the other hand, they can hardly appeal with much force to those who already accept the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation. If Jesus was the Son of God, He had no need that any man should teach Him about God. He knew the truth, and it is impossible to limit the content of His mind by the minds of His contemporaries. If it be true that the Jews were wrong in their claims to a supernatural revelation and exclusive privileges, He must have known this. And if it can be shown that He denied those claims, then all argument

to support them is useless. But did He deny them? Many of us like to think He did so, implicitly if not explicitly, because our minds are so profoundly influenced by the philosophical way of looking at things. But have we any right to assume that He knew the falsity of the Jewish belief? Was it false? Have we a right to assume that, because a non-Jewish universalism based on philosophical modes of thought appeals to us of the twentieth century, it must therefore be the absolute truth and the divine will? Surely, we must seek for some evidence. But there is no evidence in the Gospels that the Incarnate Son believed it; and His disciples believed as firmly in the exclusive value of the Jewish religion after His Resurrection as before.

May we not look at the matter in this way? Granted that what has been said in chapter vi creates a presumption in favour of the Jewish claims, would we not expect to find that, if God became Incarnate, He would appear in some vital connexion with this religion and sharing the Jewish belief in the promises to the Fathers, even if, at the same time, He had to deepen and enlighten their ideas of the divine character and purpose? On the other hand, assuming that the Jewish claims were untrue, and that in reality all religions were nearly on the same level, would not some other position in life have been more suitable for an Incarnation than that of a member of a race with such firm convictions of its own monopoly of true religion? Of course no other religion would have been suitable, for no other religion was definitely monotheistic. But if the philosophers were nearer the truth than the Hebrew prophets, would not a philosophical school have been a more likely sphere, a more suitable environment, for an Incarnation?

But surely it is no meaningless chance that the Incarnate Son appeared as a member of that sternly monotheistic religion which came into being as a result of experiences that commend themselves as instances of true communion with God, and that He appeared as the very embodiment of all the hopes which sprang from the thought of its exclusive and unique privileges.

When, then, we have regard to those experiences of the

mono-Yahwist prophets, and to the marvellous fulfilment of the Messianic Hope, may we not think that the Incarnate Son upheld the validity of the Jewish Law because it had once been in deed and in fact a divinely authorized means of approach to God ; that He countenanced the idea of the exclusive privileges of the Jews, because this idea expressed a truth ; and that He used the Jewish Scriptures as a treasury of the knowledge of God, because they did indeed contain the record of a divine self-revelation ?

On looking back over the course of the argument of this volume, it will be seen that the high value assigned to the Jewish religion is supported by four independent lines of thought.

(1) The ethical monotheism, which is the distinguishing characteristic of this religion, was the product of certain experiences which commend themselves to us as instances of communion with God. No evidence of experiences of this particular type is found anywhere else in the ancient world.

(2) Another result of these experiences was the creation of an expectation of a fuller revelation of God in connexion with the Jewish religion, which would then become universal. This expectation has received a striking fulfilment. A further revelation was given through Jesus ; and the Jewish religion, as reorganized by Jesus, is now in process of becoming universal.

(3) Whatever weight is attached to the attitude of Jesus counts entirely in favour of the view advanced here.

(4) The experiences of the prophets, the organization of the religion on a monotheistic basis, the Person and work of Jesus, the influence and expansion of Christianity, from a sequence or scheme of closely-connected facts which is now age-long and world-wide, and which has played a beneficent part in the advance of human progress.

It now remains to be seen in the second volume how the work of Jesus in instituting a New Covenant had the effect of completely transforming the ancient Jewish religion and making it into what we call ' Christianity '.

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